SINDIGA, THE SAVAGE

A TALE OF THE WILDS

SINDIGA

THE SAVAGE

A Tale of the Wilds

by

ERIC A. BEAVON

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SINDIGA, THE SAVAGE

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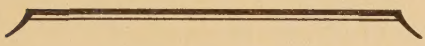
DEDICATED

TO MY FATHER

FREDERICK WILLIAM BEAVON



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FOREWORD

THE CHIEF OBJECT OF THIS BOOK IS TO DEpict graphically the effects of the white man's advent on native life in Africa, and to give those unacquainted with the African a sympathetic insight into his character and outlook. As Sir Sidney Olivier, ex-Governor of Jamaica, wrote in his introduction to John Harris's book, *Africa, Slave or Free?*—"Those who have to do disinterestedly with the negroid races come to love them—find them above the average, rich and responsive and sympathetic in some of the most characteristic and delicate qualities of essential human nature." They are, as Sir Olivier discovered, "singularly patient and forgiving, very delicately sensitive in all matters of courtesy, acutely logical, warmly sociable, humorous and kindly." Different types enter into this story, which has to do with a very warlike and a very primitive tribe, but not even the savageness of their border wars can quite obliterate their racial characteristics.

I have called my story a romance. I believe it is the first East African romance to be written in which the leading characters are natives of Africa, and white people merely figures in the background. Soon it will be impossible to write such a story without asking readers to carry their minds back several decades to an Africa which only our grandparents knew; but the happenings related herein have to do with our own time, and Sindiga is the contemporary of every reader.

Africa's problems are our problems. The social, political, and religious questions agitating Europe and America are being discussed in less technical language,

and with greater freedom, by the Kafir in his kraal. The extraordinary customs herein described are still practiced by those natives who have not yet come under the influence of Missions. The wise reader will not expect an African's life to be as full of entanglements and heart-rending episodes as popular novels depict our lives to be; nor will he expect life to move along quite so rapidly as in a land of express trains, airplanes, and telephones. Nevertheless, all is not corn-growing and cattle-herding in Africa. Work and play, love and war, marrying and giving in marriage you may expect; and when you have read the book through, your interest in primitive peoples of the world will have been enhanced, I trust, by your acquaintance with Sindiga, and the sons of the "Great One."

E. A. B.

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". . . The raw native is a fine, big, burly, dignified, merry, courteous, picturesque specimen of humanity. He is one of nature's gentlemen; he gives himself no airs; he is frank and natural in his behaviour; he is unaffected, and yet holds himself in a manner that shows plenty of self-respect. There is something about him so free and unconstrained—so perfectly natural and human—that he puts the white man who sees him in his kraal in a good humour. He seems conscious neither of superiority nor inferiority (as a matter of fact, however, he considers himself superior to the white man in all things but knowledge and cunning), but speaks to a white man as if all men were equals."

—Dudley Kidd, in *Kafir Socialism.*

PART I

"THE SONS OF THE GREAT ONE"

NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

In the names of all persons and places mentioned in this book the accent falls on the penultimate syllable.—"y" after "n" is pronounced as in "yap." "i" is usually pronounced as in "pin," except in accented syllables, when it has the double "e" sound. "a" is pronounced as in "palm."

EXAMPLES

Nyambati:—nyäm-bä′-tē.

Nyamwita:—nyäm-wē′-tä.

Maruani:—mä-ru̱-ä′-nē.

Gusii:—gu̱-sē′-ē.

Abagusii:—ä-bä-gu̱-sē′-ē.

Sindiga:—sĭn-dē′-gä.

I

SINDIGA, NYAMBATI'S SON

OLD NYAMBATI WAS NOT A RICH MAN. HE WAS nevertheless an aristocrat of excellent Gusii lineage. He had no letters after his name, but his opinion weighed with the mightiest in the land. He was Minister of War to sage Maruani, and his chief adviser in times of peace. Not infrequently Maruani played second fiddle to Nyambati, but neither was ever found bowing or scraping to the other. They recognized no overlord, nor coveted lordship. Maruani was the elder—maybe the oldest living Omogusii;[1] and among the savages age, more than any other one thing, counts for influence. Nyambati likewise was old, and more martial glory was attributed to him by the bards of Gusii than to any of his contemporaries. His heavy spear was dreaded as an emblem of might by the foes of Kitutu,[2] the Gusii clan to which he belonged; for he had wrested it from a fierce Masai in the days when the very existence of his tribe was imperiled by Masai hostility. With it Nyambati had chastised Lumbwa invaders, and in skirmishes with the Luos had won fame for the sons of the "Great One."

Under the shadow of the "Great One," Sindiga, the son of Nyambati, was born. The "Great One" was a precipitous cliff, terminating one of those grassy escarpments for which Kenya Colony is famous. Geographically the cliff retains the name "Manga," given it by

[1] Omo-gusii—A native of Gusii.

[2] Pronounced Kē-tōō'-tōō.

the Abagusii,[3] and signifying something great and wonderful beyond human comprehension. It is said that once smoke used to issue from the crevices in the rock face, but that was back in the days when—fleeing from the Masais—the Abagusii, shepherded by the patriarch, Manyanta, first happened upon this remarkable cliff about a day's march from the northern arm of the Victoria Nyanza. In its shadow—some forty miles south of the Equator in East Central Africa—Sindiga was born.

His mother shut her eyes, and turned away her head lest her eyes, penetrating the darkness, should light upon her new-born babe. He lay there in the dark and squealed; so loudly, indeed, that the old women near by declared he would grow up to have as fine a pair of lungs as old Nyambati himself.

These old women had grown impatient waiting for Nyambati's child. There in the dark they had sat the best part of a long night waiting—waiting. One of them stirred the embers of a small fire, lit over night at the foot of the bed. By dint of much laboured blowing she succeeded finally in producing a red glow. A moment later a spear of flame leapt up, and one of the ancients near by took the child in her arms. He was as pink as the refulgent red glow beginning to illumine the western sky; not at all the sort of black baby represented to the imagination of white children, with goggle eyes and thick lips, but a pink, screaming cherub with the daintiest of small mouths and lustrous black eyes, which last shut tightly on meeting the glare of the wood fire.

"Take him away! Take him away—outside!" screamed his mother, still refusing to behold him. Hastily he was passed over to the woman nearest the low doorway, who enveloped him in a goatskin and hurried outside with him. Already the red glow had faded from the sky. Manga frowned down upon the old

[3] Aba-gusii—Natives of Gusii.

woman and the young child, the darker for the dawn, now gleaming white and pure above it in the east.

"*Won't* you take him away?" repeated the frantic voice.

"He is gone, mother," replied the watchers of the night in a chorus. With a sigh of relief the mother turned towards the fire. Her eyes looked beyond it at the low doorway whence her child had flown; then beyond the fire, and the watchers, and the doorway. Beyond the shadow of the cliff outside her eyes sought to penetrate the future. What images rose before her wild eyes! Her child grown to manhood, brandishing Nyambati's spear, daring Lumbwa, Masai, and Luo to menace their lowly abode; leading the victorious Abagusii on to the annihilation of proud, impotent foes. Her child, in gallant attire, wooing the loveliest maiden in the land; winning her, and astonishing her parents with the size of his cattle "dowry." Her child, finally in the old men's councils, brave, wise, and respected, an elder among elders. Then her eyes came back to the shadow outside, to the low doorway, the watchers, and the flickering, small fire.

Keruo was hungry to see her child; her wee, newborn infant who was to live and not die as all his brothers had died; her magnificent small son who should grow up to be a great man and outshine all other Abagusii for wisdom and valor. Oh! Why could she not see him?

She had spoken her longing desire aloud. "It would not do," the old women said; and the first to speak added: "You do not want it to die like the rest. It must be greeted by the morning wind, and the rising sun. It must lie by the wayside and receive the blessings of all who pass by—so it will live and not die."

"I know it," the mother replied. "I know it. It is all true what you say; but it is terribly hard."

"Yes. But it is better that it should not die," said the old women with one voice.

Outside, along in the shadow of the cliff, raced Old Age with the new life in her bosom. And still the "Great One" frowned down upon them both, the darker for the blazing light now streaming from above it. Thus the shadow has blackened over Africa through the long years. Old Age has chosen the pathway, and Life has lain in its bosom, swathed in goatskins. Today Dawn finds the black shadow hiding much that is lovely, much that is inspiring and grand: rare ferns of friendship feeding on hard rock; gold in the granite; and, towering above crystal springs of primitive thought, majestic trees of Truth. But Youth today is leaving Old Age behind in the shadow, and, daring the precipitous pathway, battles alone for the summit, and the Light of a new morning.

On a narrow thoroughfare the old woman came to a halt. Turning her back on the dawn she watched the shadow as it receded, leaving the far-off Gwasi Hills bathed in light. Down their slopes the shadow crept. Presently the waters of the Kavirondo Gulf gleamed brighter in the distance, and—receding still—the shadow soon left Luoland shining in the sun. Light gleamed from the summit of Nyanchwa Hill, and back the shadow crept over the green undulations of Kitutu. At last the light struck the roof of the hut where lay Keruo, the mother of Sindiga. Carefully the old woman lowered her burden to the ground, and turning saw the sun rise gloriously over the cliff. The child silenced a wail it had set up on losing the protecting arms: the sunlight was warm and soothing, and he lay contented.

Within a few hours of birth Sindiga's brothers had had their mouths forced open and hot porridge forced down, lest in the interval of waiting for more appropriate diet they should die. Two had died within a few hours of this first meal, and one had lived to feed on

sour milk and thin porridge to the age of six months before it followed them.

Sindiga lay until noon by the wayside. The old woman stood over him and shielded him from the sun as soon as the day grew hot. She danced over him, shrugging her shoulders and jerking her arms downward, as though showering blessings upon the mite. She sang in her old cracked voice, and the crow's-feet deepened around her kind eyes as she smiled down upon the boy—for she loved babies.

Long the old woman danced, and loud she sang. And the babe slept soundly, secure from cows' milk and porridge, stroked by the breezes, and blessed by the passers-by. They flung their brass ornaments and leather charms down before him, and passed on their way. No one passed but blessed the child, and gave him some simple gift.

Sindiga had a better start in life than the majority of Gusii children. His mother delayed some ten days before shaving away with a blunt knife the black curls with which the babe had been born. He cried lustily during this process, which left his head sore and bleeding, but quieted down as soon as he realized the operation was over. Daily he slept several hours out in the sun or in the shadow of Nyambati's hut. Sour milk inevitably supplemented the *adequacy* of his diet. It may truly be said that he throve *in spite of* the love and care bestowed upon him.

Keruo was Nyambati's first and favorite wife. According to Gusii custom he was not allowed to see either Keruo or her child for several months after the birth. He had therefore gone to live for a time with an elder brother several miles away. The separation from his faithful Keruo was hard, but even in central Africa a respectable native must abide by established custom.

The circumstances of Nyambati's return are sufficiently interesting to bear relating. As a rule Sindiga

slumbered in the cornfield while his mother and Nyambati's second wife, Kinanga, prepared the ground for the new year's sowing of corn. In January or February, according to the distance from Lake Victoria or the Gulf, all the Abagusii turn out to break up their fallow ground for the *wimbi* crop. Nyambati himself had cut down the bush and burned it, before his wives commenced their hoeing operations. It was the driest season of the Gusii year and men, women, and children were taking to their bent hoes with which they dig whole fields of grain. The scorching sun had caused the *omotembe* trees to lose the leaves they had kept since harvest and they were now gorgeous with flaming red blossoms. The hillside pastures had yellowed, and the previous year's cornfields had grown up into bush. The roofs of the Gusii dwellings had recently been renovated with long grass plucked by hand. Their thatched peaks seen from the top of the escarpment looked like mushrooms. They were mostly deserted, and wicker doors had been drawn across the entrances to prevent the intrusion of stray goats during their owners' absence. The red earth was cracking with the heat. As Nyambati strode through the fields, the families at work there ran to greet him. Women in greased leather skirts that dangled and flapped around their ankles; girls similarly dressed, but with fewer ornaments, and short fringes of leather taking the place of the long, maternal aprons; old men ringed about arms and legs with brass and iron wire; and young men, occasionally painted, but otherwise void of ornament—all had a hearty greeting for Nyambati, the warrior sage. Several young men were busy assisting Nyambati's wives. Volunteers were likewise at work hoeing the fields of the infirm. Men and women dug side by side, husbands with their wives, brothers with their sisters. The wealthiest polygamists join their wives in the fields at hoeing season, and he who shirks work of this kind is not highly esteemed.

Who slacks at this time is considered an enemy of the commonweal, for the new year's sowing of grain is the next year's bread supply. No one is allowed to starve; hence, everyone is expected to work. With bare backs shining in the sun and babies sprawling at their feet, with impromptu chant and song, with jest and laughter they plied their hoes, using the blunt backs to beat out the charred grass and roots. The sight was good to old Nyambati. Birds and flowers, rainbows and dazzling sunsets meant little to these children of the soil, but they all gloried in supple bodies and strong brown arms, in the red sod upturned, in life, and untrammeled freedom: these things they loved.

On the day of Nyambati's return, Sindiga had been left in the charge of his half-sister, Kinanga's daughter. Wearying presently of the environment of the kraal, she laid the boy under the eaves of Keruo's hut and skipped away into the bush.

He was a brown baby now, large and healthy. After rolling over several times he fingered the plaster of the hut, pushed his finger into an ant-hole, grasped a small stick within his reach, and finally fell asleep with it clenched in his chubby fist. Flies came and settled on his eyelids, traveled down his warm body, and back to settle on his red lips. A diminutive African fowl with an abnormally large comb led her chickens in circuit round the sleeping boy. She even pecked inquisitively at his fingers, but he did not wake. A hungry-looking dog, stalking the hut in search of a bone, came upon him where he lay. He pricked up his overlarge ears, moved over to him, smelt him, and furtively proceeded on his way.—Then a rat did likewise.

A well-beaten pathway led past the hut, and an ant-bear had dug shallow holes everywhere in the vicinity. Suddenly, out of the largest of these excavations, appeared the head of an evil-looking snake. It emerged watchfully, until its black body, four or five feet long,

lay right across the pathway. As it came slowly forward with erect head, the underside of its neck shone dazzlingly white. It was within an ace of the child when a footfall on the pathway caused it to change its mind. With incredible swiftness it reached the hole where it had spent the night, and disappeared. The traveler passed, stepping over the hole in complete ignorance of any kind of danger.

It was some time before the hideous head and lowering eyes reappeared. It made swiftly this time for the shadow of the hut where lay the sleeping child. Partially coiling beside it, the snake glowered upon a scraggy chicken, speeding its terrified way in the direction of its mother.

Sindiga's sister, returning stealthily, saw the snake crawl across the infant in pursuit of the chicken. She stood over the ant-bear hole and screamed.—"Kinanga!" she called. "Come quickly, Kinanga!" Her mother came up running, with Keruo at her heels. Their approach caused the reptile to retreat in the direction of the child; but Sindiga rolled over in his sleep, and the snake doubled back on its track. Leaving the little girl standing over the hole, it disappeared amid the foliage of a near-by tree.

It was at this juncture that Nyambati arrived on the scene. He found Keruo with the child in her arms soundly rating Kinanga's small daughter for having neglected her charge. The two mothers vied in their attempts to get Nyambati to take his child in his arms then and there. But old as he was, Nyambati was shy of babies.

"I should hurt it," he said.

"Hold him just for a little," the women persuaded.

"Ya-ya!" he said with emphasis, and this meant emphatically: "No!"—"My arms were made for grappling with unwashed Luos and screeching Lumbwas, not for holding children."—Nevertheless, that evening saw him

with Sindiga in his arms, telling Kinanga's boy and girl stories of past days.

Now, however, tearing away from his wives he stooped low and entered the hut. He had no intention of leaving a snake at large in the vicinity. In a moment he emerged with a cow-hide rolled up in his large fist. He called loudly certain boys' names: "Mosoti! Machuki! Rasugu!"

The cliff echoed back each name, and presently they all came running, delighted to greet Nyambati. Each one shouted after the other, "How are you, Nyambati?" and he took time to greet each one. Then, addressing himself to Sindiga's half-sister, he said, "Nyakiage, you take your brother down to the spring, and bring back some water. And quickly, you boys, gather stones and drive yon snake from its perch!"

With shouts and cautions bandied back and forth they hastened to obey. Nyakiage fastened Sindiga securely to her back with a large skin, balanced a round water-pot on her head, and left for the spring.

It was some time before they could provoke the great black snake to relinquish the tree. Nyambati stood near its foot with the hide in his hands outspread. So swift was the snake's descent that when Nyambati, quick as lightning, fell upon it, burying it in the hide, there were those who declared it had escaped. Nyambati felt for the neck of the snake in the hide, and when he stood erect again with the hide in his hand, the snake lay at his feet strangled.

He carried the snake away and hung it, for the time being, under the roof of a corncrib. When he returned he was called upon to end a discussion between the boys as to which was the most dangerous, this great black snake or the puff adder. The old man explained that the venom of the black snake was always fatal; that the Abagusii had a sure antidote for the poison of the puff adder; and that the deadliest poison used on their

arrows was obtained from black snakes, the like of which they had just killed.

Shortly after this episode the Lumbwas made a determined raid on the Abagusii by night. These were a Nilotic tribe living to the east of Gusii. They burned the kraals beneath the cliff, and carried off a wealth of cattle. Nyambati distinguished himself in a futile attempt to recover the plunder, and when next the Lumbwas attacked Gusii they came determined to kill Nyambati.

This was some months later. The Lumbwas were repulsed, and the Abagusii lost no cattle; but Keruo and young Sindiga were taken captive, and carried off into the impregnable Lumbwa Hills.

Nyambati grew gray endeavoring to effect the rescue of his favorite wife and son. Two years passed by, and so fierce an avenger did he become that during this time the Lumbwas refrained from raiding the Kitutus of Kanyimbo, otherwise known as the "Sons of Manga." It seemed they could not stand against them with Nyambati at their head.

One day, after a long absence, Nyambati returned with a three-year-old child in his arms. Many believed it was a Lumbwa's child, but Nyambati called him Sindiga. People declared he had chosen this method of avenging himself upon the tribe which had wrecked his home; for one day there was talk of Lumbwa kraals having been burned to the ground, and the next day old Nyambati turned up with the child. Most of the Kitutus of Manga applauded the old man's courage in crossing the Sondo River and so daringly executing his vengeance. A few there were, however, who said the Masais had kindled the fires, and that Nyambati had merely bought of the Lumbwas an illegitimate child, who would otherwise have been murdered. Kinanga herself professed to believe this unlikely story.

Certain it was that Keruo never returned. Doubtless she had been taken sufficiently far into the heart of Lumbwa to interfere with Nyambati ever tracing her. He was urged to take a third wife, but he doggedly refused. In Gusii the number of wives a man may take is limited only by the number of cattle he owns wherewith to pay for them; but Nyambati used to say, "Sindiga shall profit by any cows I am left with after Mosoti marries." And the child Nyambati brought back with him came to regard Kinanga as his mother. He was called "Sindiga, Nyambati's son."

II

STRANGE VISITORS

ONE DAY A STRANGER ARRIVED AT NYAMBATI'S kraal, obviously way-worn and in need of Kitutu hospitality. There was nothing in his looks to commend him, but in no circumstances would Nyambati have refused a Gusii stranger a courteous welcome. Unreserved hospitality to travelers is a rule rarely broken in Africa.

The wayfarer stood for a moment in silence until Kinanga looked up from her grindstone to greet him. Such deference on the part of strangers is expected and required. For him to have spoken first would have been highly improper.

The stranger's response to Kinanga's greeting was quiet, earnest, and unassuming, but he drank with loud relish the thick milk she gave him. Then, while Nyambati's wife prepared porridge, he poured into her ready ear the biggest piece of news she had heard for many a long day.

In the middle of his story a neighbor arrived, who in turn stood silent until Kinanga greeted him and bade him be seated. For the benefit of this visitor, and a few others who turned up within the space of five minutes, the stranger began again at the beginning and recounted the whole.

The gist of his story was that light-skinned creatures resembling human beings had dropped down from heaven into Boguche, and were even at that moment making for Kitutu. They bestrode donkeys and carried

with them "cudgels that spat out fire."—A bystander explained for the benefit of the company that donkeys were a sort of wild beast which in days gone by had roamed Gusii in herds, but at that time were only to be found in Masai. Simultaneous inquiries as to what the fire-cudgels were elicited no clearer definition than had been given in the first place—namely, cudgels that spat out fire.

Wild excitement soon penetrated all the country below the cliff, and the villagers turned out to hear of the stranger and Kinanga the scarcely credible news.

It was impossible to exhaust the patience of the stranger, who began his story at the beginning for each new arrival; and that evening goats were killed, as of course the stranger had anticipated. He feasted with them late and after supper, noticing one who carried a harp, asked leave to try it. Forthwith he demonstrated such skill upon its eight strings, enhanced by the extraordinary nature of the song he sang, as instantly drew forth storms of applause from his hearers. The harp was a rude, locally made instrument designed for noise rather than melody, but it served the bard's purpose. The twang of the strings was made voluminous by a hollow, drumlike base made of stretched leather.

The stranger sang his faith in Nyambati's greatness and his appreciation of Kinanga's cookery, winding into his praises a full account of all he had seen in Boguche. His mind traveled aimlessly from one topic to another, but he twanged the harp loudest when he sang of the cudgels which spat out fire. He wound up with eloquent mention of the keenness of Gusii spears, and the dexterity of Abagusii bowmen, declaring the race to which he belonged to be the bravest, and the cleanest, and the most hospitable people under the sun. Kinanga took Sindiga with her and slept at her mother's that night, leaving the bard to occupy Nyambati's bed; for her

worthy husband had gone on a journey to make overtures with a debtor for the return of some cattle.

Who shall describe the wonder and awe which gripped the Kitutus of Manga upon their first sight of the Arab traders, for such the "heavenly" visitants were. The old men declared that this was not their first visit, and told how in times past they had come and gone, leaving behind them, in Gusii, wondrous shells and brasses, still worn by the old people. Black Swahili merchants had visited them within the memory of some of the younger men. They had carried no fire-arms, however, and were obviously human; but where on earth, thought everyone, was there to be found a race with light skins like these Arabs?

"They must be soft," said one, "for their skins resemble the skins of new-born babes. Let us frighten them and take possession of their goods."

"We must not be rash," the old men counseled. "Their kind may be numerous; and besides, our first duty is hospitality, for they came to us peaceably."

The Arabs were about twenty in number. As many Swahilis accompanied them. These black Swahilis cooked the food of the superior beings, and knowing a little Ekegusii,[1] translated for them. Both the Arabs and their servants wore, in place of skins, brown or white robes, and wonderful headgear of the same soft material. Many of the Abagusii had never set eyes on cotton or woolen clothing before, goatskins for both sexes being the universal fashion in those parts.

There was considerable disputing among some as to whether the Swahilis were men or women, the difficulty arising out of the fact that they did all the cooking and carrying. Definite assurance that they were men was forthcoming from the stranger who had heralded their approach. A drunken Nyaribari, he said, thinking the porters were women, had impudently tried to rob

[1] The language of the Abagusii.

one of them who happened to be lagging behind the rest. He had promptly been knocked down. He was getting up again, convinced of his mistake, when one of the Arabs had turned in his saddle and pointed a cudgel at him. The cudgel itself had let out a dreadful noise, and had spouted fire. The stranger had himself seen the Nyaribari fall down dead on the spot, and was ready to swear on the head of a goat that no spear or arrow had touched him.

"We must know the top and bottom of this," said old Maruani. "He must swear."

So a goat was brought. The stranger willingly laid his hands on its head, and declared solemnly that no human spear, nor arrow, nor anything else whatsoever, had touched the Nyaribari; that not even the fire from the cudgel had been seen to touch him; but that, as an honest man, he would not take it upon himself to say that the spirits were incapable of throwing invisible spears. The goat was thereupon killed, and speared by all the young men as a warning of the end which would await the stranger should he afterwards be found out to have lied.

The possibility of the Arabs being in league with the spirits thoroughly daunted the Abagusii, and the merchants were left to trade unmolested in the shadow of Manga. They sold coils of iron and brass wire, receiving in exchange meat, grain, and milk; but they paid best of all for elephant tusks.

The natives showed little inclination to beg cloth, and still less to buy it. A present of a piece of bright, new cloth was offered Maruani, but he declared it had a disagreeable odor. Subsequently the cloth was handed round and smelt by all, and all passed the same opinion on it. The Abagusii preferred their skins.

The natives helped the Arabs to build temporary mud and wattle huts, and Gusii girls danced for them. The Arabs gave them necklaces of bright-colored beads, and

told the children wonderful stories of distant lands. Soon most cordial relations were established, and when the Arabs began to speak of departure they were urged to come again—but some of the Abagusii were silent.

When it became quite evident that the Arabs intended to return whence they came, the bolder natives would have prevented them. "We won't let you return," said they, "unless you prove to us that you are stronger than we."

"Very good!" said the Arab leader. "That is easily done. Hang one of your toughest shields on yonder tree."

A particularly heavy shield was selected, and hung up a few yards away. An Arab promptly sent a bullet through it, and bade the natives investigate their shield. They crowded round it with the wildest acclamations, for a hole was there where no spear had been! Needless to say, the Arabs were allowed to depart in peace. This does not mean that if so small a company of Arabs had shown open hostility, the natives would not have resented it; but there had been no provocation, and the incentive to engage them in battle was insufficient to risk losing some of their best fighting men. The Abagusii not only quarreled among themselves, but were surrounded on all sides by enemies. It paid to be discreet.

A crowd of children had assembled to see the Arabs demonstrate their power. Mere babies sprawled after their older brothers and sisters, sharing in the general excitement without knowing its cause.

"Spare us a Gusii baby to take back with us," said a handsome Arab.

"Now you are asking something!" laughed the Gusii mothers.

"We will pay for it," the Arab returned gaily.

"And pray what would you give for a baby?" curiosity demanded.

"Come now! But that would depend very much upon

the *kind* of baby; but we have plenty of iron wire left. See here!" and he threw open the mouth of a sack, displaying the shining coils.

Then it was that a wicked spirit entered Kinanga—a spirit of greed, and of revolt; greed for brave ornaments such as now shone on so many brown arms, and revolt against Nyambati's worship of Sindiga. She had upbraided him the day before he left for not marrying again and lightening her lot. What other woman would stand what she had stood—doing all the work of the home and field herself? And her husband had sufficient cattle to get as many more wives to help her as he had fingers on one hand! She writhed again as she remembered his stubbornness.

"What interest has he any more in me or my two children?" she muttered to herself. "None," lied the spirit within her. "He is mad," thought she, "and that child he brought back with him from Lumbwa is making him madder and madder every day." "It is *that* child," insisted her evil spirit, "that reminds him of *that* woman."

Although she pretended to disbelieve it, Kinanga had no doubt but that this was the real Sindiga, the son of Keruo, and the cause of all her sorrows. Why not get rid of him? Here was her chance. Of course she might never be forgiven, but what then? There were younger men in the world than Nyambati—more deer in the bush than had ever been speared. And other men had bought fine ornaments for their wives. She did not trouble to reflect that had he been at home Nyambati would have done the same for her; or if she did, she hastily dismissed the thought. She was tired that day, and her superstition had fastened itself on Sindiga as the cause of all her sorrows; and so she determined to sell him to these travelers, and forever be rid of him.

For young Sindiga, Kinanga received four shining coils of iron wire, an eighth of an inch thick. Some

women endeavored to remonstrate with her, saying that it was against Gusii custom to sell a child, except for food in time of famine. But the Arabs interfered, saying, "Let her alone. Surely she knows her own mind. Do not the Luos, and the Lumbwas, and other tribes sell to us their children? Then let the woman be! See, it is a closed bargain. The child is ours."

Thus young Sindiga was sold, as Joseph of Israel was sold to the Ishmaelites. He was carried away crying lustily and calling for Nyambati; and Kinanga returned to her abode, in fear and trembling of her husband's anger.

From the Indian Ocean the only direct approach to Gusii is by way of the Masai country to the east and south. The slave route from Zanzibar into the interior did not touch Gusii. Leaving Kavirondo and the Victoria Nyanza to the north it passed from Tanganyika directly into Uganda. Of the horrors of the slave trade, of the terrorism and cruelty of the Arabs, and of the long, forced marches to the East Coast of Africa, the Abagusii knew nothing. The few Arabs and Swahilis who ventured to penetrate the country to the immediate east of the Nyanza depended upon the goodwill of the natives for their sustenance. No party sufficiently large to wage war had ever reached the Kavirondo country, of which Gusii was a part.

The party of Arabs that visited Kanyimbo on this occasion went back the way they had come, escorted by the Abagusii in high spirits for the first few miles. It so happened that Nyambati, driving a couple of cows before him, met the Arabs before they left Gusii.

Not caring whether he was assaulting demons or men, Nyambati rushed at the Arab who bore Sindiga, butting as he did so under the very muzzle of his gun. They were riding in single file, or the resulting chaos would have been the more complete. The donkey which suffered the old man's onrush executed some marvelous

gyrations in the narrow path, exciting the donkey in its rear to follow suit. The riders were unseated in a moment. Breaking away from grabbing hands, the old man snatched Sindiga from the amazed Arab, and ran.

He might have got well away had he not rushed between two more donkeys and under the very nose of a third, where he was forced to hesitate as to the way to turn next. A Swahili seized the child, and Nyambati suddenly discovered himself a prisoner.

It was some time before he became aware that a black man like himself, but wearing a ragged white robe, was addressing him in broken Ekegusii. The Arabs had come peaceably to Gusii, the voice declared. Their chief wanted to know why he had been attacked in so outrageous a manner.

Nyambati gasped, and stared hard at the handsome Arab smiling down upon him. A crowd of natives had gathered by this time, and there were signs of growing excitement. From the Arab he looked back at the translator, who repeated what he had just said. Nyambati replied by glaring upon the Swahili who held Sindiga.

"You are its father, I suppose," said the Arab. "But why this fury? I have bought the child, and will surely bring him up as my own son. Go home and see what gifts I have left with Kinanga, your good wife."

"My good wife! Gifts? Bought my child?" stammered Nyambati. "No! There is a mistake somewhere. Here, take these cows if you like, but give me back my child!"

"Oh, very well," cried the Arab. "That's not usual, you know, but if you are set on it, let it be so by all means." And his eyes ran swiftly over the cows' points. "I am your friend, not your enemy. Here, Mahomed, hand over the child. We don't want to get into this Omogusii's bad books."

Nyambati, dazed and only half understanding it all, took Sindiga in his arms, and respectfully wished the

merchants good day. When he reached home, the laughter of the Arabs was still ringing in his ears.

After this episode Sindiga became quite a favorite with old and young. Boys older than Sindiga begged leave to "mind him," and rather coveted him his adventure with the "Abarabu" traders; and he became the idol of his half-sister, Nyakiage, and her friends. Years passed by; harvest seasons came and went. At an early age, as became the son of a warrior, Sindiga was circumcised according to Gusii rite. He played with other children in the shadow of the cliff, and helped to herd cattle on the higher reaches of the escarpment.

The neighborhood of the Great Cliff was an enchanting, if perilous playground. Crystal springs bubbled up in fairy alcoves under the yawning rock face. Innumerable varieties of ferns glistened in robes of dew, and mosses clad the cold, wet stone. Great, silvery trunked trees, finding insufficient hold in the widening rock crevices, sent down new roots from their gnarled boughs. Instinct with life, these sensitive hands reached perpendicularly down to take fresh hold in the rich loam below the cliff. Green, ferny caverns, roofed with creepers and damp mossy boughs, led away beneath dipping branches back to the rocky face of the cliff. There were real caves too—not deep or long, but fine hiding places for Sindiga and his young companions. Day after day, and month after month they herded cows above the escarpment, whence the waters of the Kavirondo Gulf could be seen, stretching like a silken ribbon from east to west.

In his early years Sindiga made grass whistles, and reed lutes, and harps with single strings. He played upon these, sometimes the livelong day, while he watched the cattle. Many families' cattle grazed together in one large herd, tended by the boys and girls of the villages below the cliff. It has been said that African children make work of their very play. These Abagusii,

at least, made play of their work, for they enjoyed tramping behind their cattle as much as white children enjoy dragging imitation animals along stone pavements.

The day came when Sindiga was admitted on an equality into the association and play of the older boys, who did no cattle herding themselves but deputed their minors to watch the cattle in their stead. While the girls made loaves of bread with clay, and clay children to eat them, the big boys played Gusii hockey, and the smaller boys minded the cows and goats.

Sindiga now learned to play "hockey" himself. For this game the players are armed with stout sticks, and a ball is shaped out of the bark of an *omotembe* tree. Goals are chosen, maybe thirty yards apart, and the players take up their respective positions with from five to twelve ranged on either side. Two recognized experts at the game stand out and touch opposite sides of the ball with their sticks. With these they push till the ball escapes in one direction or the other. Back and forth the ball is then driven till one player forces the other back. This is the signal for those on the side of the loser to come to his rescue. Immediately both sides engage, striking the ball furiously with their sticks till it is driven past one of the goals. Each side keeps count of the number of wins, and they return in the evening to their kraals boastful of their prowess or explaining their defeat, as the case may be.

It is a mistake to suppose that Kaffir [2] children know nothing of the meaning of play. Sindiga and his companions introduced considerable variety into their games. When tired of hockey they would engage in a sham battle, with the soft pods of a thorny tree for missiles, and strong straws for spears; or gathering each a pile of stones, they would aim at tree stumps, till by

[2] Kaffir—i. e., in the broadest sense of the word, belonging to the *Bantu* family, as the Wa-Swahili, the Amazulu, the Baganda, the Abagusii, etc.

common consent one was acclaimed more skillful than the rest; also from the bark of a certain bush they made slings with which they hurled missiles from the summit of the cliff at objects below.

They all, boys and girls, gloried in running and leaping contests, although the sexes never competed against each other. Neither side would have desired it. Informally they ran, and leaped, and climbed trees together, always showing a keen interest in each other's sports. Oftentimes the girls would make miniature kraals with sticks and grass, and fill them with clay cattle. These, the big boys would pretend to watch, till the small boys came as play thieves to steal them, and were driven away in a confusion of shouts and laughter.

Sindiga's bosom friend was a boy of his own age named Barongo. The two grew up together. Together they roamed the escarpment and explored the streams; and together they listened to the stories Nyambati could tell of ancient days. In contests with other young Abagusii these two always took one side, but they never tired of competing singly with each other. Barongo was the swiftest of foot, but Sindiga was the stronger of the two.

Nyambati's son was also friendly with an older boy named Ondieki, the son of a fortune-teller of some repute. He was Barongo's only rival in running contests, and prided himself moreover on his wrestling ability. Together with a large frame, he had inherited from his mother, who was not of the Gusii tribe herself, a deceptive and a quarrelsome disposition, which more than once had seriously endangered his relations with the other two boys. His father's influence reached far and wide, and only came to an end in his own house, where Ondieki's mother held absolute sway.

Sindiga had an elder brother named Mosoti. This was Kinanga's child. He and his sister, Nyakiage, were playmates of the three friends already mentioned, and

Barongo's little sister, Nyamwita, completed the circle of intimate friends.

One day, in that lazy season of the Gusii year twixt the last weeding of the grain fields and harvest, these six friends were chasing guinea-fowl through the long grass below the cliff. Against the cliff face they stumbled across a pile of firewood, a few feet away from which was a spring of fresh water. The boys were wondering why the woodpile was there when Kinanga appeared with a water-pot on her head. Depositing it near the spring she threw another faggot of dry wood onto the pile.

"Great One," she said, as she threw it down, "when you sit by your fire thinking of your children, remember me also."

"Why do you do that, Kinanga?" asked Mosoti. Being the eldest, he acted as spokesman for the rest.

"The 'Great One' gives us water, and we pay for it in firewood," she replied; and Sindiga puzzled over her words.

At that moment Nyakiage came up. She had often drawn water from this spring herself, and professed astonishment at her brother's ignorance. "Yes, didn't you know that?" she cried incredulously.

"So you're here," exclaimed Kinanga, addressing her daughter sharply. "Gallivanting off with the boys as usual! Run and fetch the other water-pot and give your mother a helping hand!"

She threw a significant glance in Nyamwita's direction, as if to suggest that she too would be better away from the boys and helping *her* mother. But Nyamwita tossed her head, as much as to say: "I'm quite able to look after myself, and Barongo will tell *me* what to do." For in Africa elder brothers may instruct their sisters with as much authority as a parent, and Barongo had not opposed her accompanying them. Nyakiage ran off down the hill to do her mother's behest, executed

it in a minimum of time, and speedily rejoined her young companions.

"Let's hunt for honey," suggested Barongo, and commenced to climb. Sindiga followed more slowly than the rest, for he was still pondering Kinanga's words. Who was the Great One? Could he be *Nyasaye* Himself—the Creator? Some time, he decided, he would diligently inquire of Nyambati concerning this mysterious Being, who apparently caused the water to flow from Manga.

The six were soon racing each other up the cliff face. Presently Mosoti cried to the others, "See, there's a hive above us, and another below us—there! Hear the bees hum!"

"Ee!" exclaimed Ondieki in some consternation. "They're all around us."

"Never mind! Where is the honey?" shouted Nyamwita, almost in a boy's voice; and Barongo laughed.

"I'm getting at it," soon came the voice of Sindiga from below, "but the bees sting ferociously today."

Nyamwita and her brother climbed down hand over hand to assist Sindiga, and the other three hunted for the hive above them.

How riotous they were! How gaily they laughed and called to each other! These dark-eyed, brown-skinned children of the dark continent were acutely conscious of the joy of life. Hunting for its sweets they were heedless of its stings. They were indeed the very essence of Africa.

—Suddenly, below them, a startled deer dashes away from its covert. A whoop goes up from Barongo, and he is after it like a shot, with Ondieki at his heels. The deer is of a larger species than is found in Gusii today, and it flees so swiftly away over the rocks that the boys are in danger of losing sight of it, and spraining ankles in the bargain. The two girls entwine arms, and content themselves with watching the chase from a high,

rocky platform jutting out from the cliff face, conveniently far away from the perturbed hives.

A crowd of young Abagusii, who have been sailing straws down a stream, give pursuit ahead of the four friends. Their merry shouts attract others, who eagerly and unceremoniously join the chase. Over hedges and across gardens they go, and no one interferes—for the deer is afoot. Sindiga and Mosoti are running in Ondieki's wake, but Barongo the fleet-footed, away in advance of them, is gaining on the crowd of late-starters. He darts past the hindermost, passes through the crowd, gains on the foremost, and shoots past him. He is leading the chase again. Sindiga and the rest are soon surrounded by an ever-increasing crowd of pursuers; but their eyes watch the quarry as they run.—Is it possible for human foot to overtake the nimble deer where it leaps and races ahead of them all? In the white man's country the fox is run down by swift dogs, and the hunters ride fleet horses; but these African youths hunt the deer on foot beneath a torrid sun.

The deer is soon a mere speck in the far distance. Has it escaped them? No, for the Abagusii still follow on, cutting off corners where they can, and shouting. Most of them carry light spears with which customarily they go herding. They have left the great cliff and its shadow far behind. A mile away, across a deep valley, their cries are taken up, and men and women leave their fields and gardens to give chase. The deer hears the gruffer cries of grown men in front, and turns aside. Its maneuver is greeted with shouts from every conceivable direction. Seeking cover in a wood of *misa-bisabi* trees, it doubles back upon its first pursuers, and strikes out for the pass over the escarpment—but too late. The youths have scattered, and it is ringed in with foes. Barongo spies it making quick turns in the bush and dives after it. He is followed by Ondieki, and a moment or two later by Sindiga himself. The deer

dashes through a couple of thorny fences; it disappears, and the three separate. Ondieki alone carries a spear, and feels sure the quarry will be his, but suddenly rounding a bush he is struck with amazement, for down on its forelegs is the deer, with its two long, pointed horns stuck fast in the fence of a cattle kraal, and astride it is Barongo, the son of Kibagendi. Fortune has favored him, and weaponless he has won the deer.

When Sindiga came up, it was to see Ondieki and Barongo grappling fiercely with each other. The deer lay wounded at their feet. Instigated by a wave of jealousy Ondieki had essayed to push Barongo aside with one arm, while he speared the deer with the other; but Barongo had refused to budge. Nyambati's son was just in time to see the latter flung forcibly backward. When the rest of the hunt arrived on the scene Ondieki was standing over the deer alone, and Barongo, wearing a look of unconcern, was leaning up against a tree some distance away.

"You cornered it?" yelled one big fellow to Ondieki.

"I and no other," answered Ondieki, stepping aside.

Half a dozen knives flashed at once over the prone deer. A youth who had kept pace with Sindiga for some distance eyed Ondieki narrowly, for he had noticed him glance angrily in Barongo's direction.

"What's your grudge against Barongo anyway?" he growled.

"You dare ask me?" Ondieki challenged wrathfully.

Then Barongo interfered: "Stop!" he said. "Ondieki ran it down, Machuki. He cornered it. There is nothing more to be said."

Sindiga guessed that his friend Barongo was lying, but at the moment held his peace. He asked his friend afterwards why he had lied.

"A deer is nothing," said Barongo, "and Ondieki is nothing—but his father has medicine."

Sindiga was greatly surprised. More than once he had

seen and spoken to Ondieki's father, who had appeared to him a kindly, inoffensive sort of old man. Soothsayers were often reported to possess, besides oracular powers, certain deadly poisons which they would not scruple to use if given offense, but Ondieki's father had never been known to harm anyone. Barongo, however, was exceedingly superstitious.

The crowd thickened around the deer, and the boys found it expedient to edge away from careless feet and flashing knives. Here was food; and where the carcass was, there the eagles gathered together. The men ripped and tore at the quivering, live flesh with their rude weapons, and lapped up the blood with their hands. There was no inspiration for youth in this grim work. The excitement of the chase, the triumph of the swift was their guerdon; and so they left the scrambling, grabbing crowd, and made their way back to Kanyimbo and their kraals beneath the cliff.

Before they left, Ondieki was given a hind leg in recognition of his having reached the deer first. Sindiga heard a grizzly old warrior say to Machuki: "I would have preferred beating him with it, for he's a proven rascal. From the top of the rise back there I saw someone astride the deer who did not look like Ondieki. But we have Barongo's word for it that Ondieki ran it down, and without a doubt it was he who speared it. So he gets the trophy, and there's an end to it."

Sindiga seized the first opportunity of telling Ondieki in private that he was a mean, cowardly fellow. The latter endeavored to justify himself, but finding it difficult, grew bitter. Sindiga and he had quarreled before; but now began an estrangement which not even Barongo's earnest efforts could in any way overcome or allay.

III

A CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

LIKE MOST YOUNG PEOPLE, SINDIGA HAD A GRANDmother. Keruo had left him this priceless possession. After his mother's disappearance, old Muraa was ever the happiest and the most colloquial after a visit from her favorite grandson. Prior to his purchase by the Arabs she had wound herself around his young heart with gifts of milk, and bread, and rare herbs. But now titbits of mutton, and beef, and even fowl, were common enticements.

Old Muraa had no doubts as to whether or not Sindiga was Keruo's child. When Ondieki once, in her hearing, had called Sindiga a Lumbwa, she had bruised him with the leg of a stool, and ordered him never again to let his evil shadow fall across her compound. History does not record his ever having dared to disobey this command, but Sindiga continued to associate with him till the event related in the last chapter.

As Sindiga grew older he did not visit his grandmother any the less frequently. Sometimes he went alone, and sometimes Barongo, or his brother, or Nyakiage, accompanied him. His half-sister was as fond of Muraa as if she had been her own grandmother. Kinanga's mother lived too far away for her grandchildren often to see her, but she lived up to the reputation of grandmothers generally and had a permanent place in their affections.

Sindiga was sitting at the gateway of Nyambati's

kraal one morning paring a stick, when Nyakiage approached with her arm round Nyamwita's waist.

"Coming for a walk?" she queried.

"Where to?" Sindiga asked.

"To your grandmother Muraa's," answered his sister.

Barongo had gone on a journey to a place called Boguche, and would not be back till evening. So, having nothing particular to do that day, Sindiga did not have to think twice. "Very good!" said he, and strode off before them.

Their path at first wound tortuously through alternating garden and thick bush. Then it traversed more or less directly a smooth, grassy hilltop diving thence finally into a valley, where it ran along a limpid stream as far as its source. Here it left the valley and commenced winding again, up and up into the Kitutu highlands. Sindiga continued to lead the way, as was proper according to native custom; but he chatted over his shoulder to his sister and her friend as they went along.

"How do you do, young Sindiga?" called a voice as they climbed the hill leading up to their grandfather's kraal. On a bypath stood a Kitutu warrior whom Sindiga recognized at once.

"Very well, Nyanguka," he answered, "and yourself?"

"Jolly!" he replied. Then, turning to Nyamwita: "I hear your brother nearly won deer's meat the other day. Fine sport, eh, Sindiga?"

The boy assented. "But you'll be seeing finer before you're much older," continued the warrior. "It's time you were proving your mettle, lad."

"I'm ready, Nyanguka, any time."

"Any time's no time. The last bird to rise gets the most sticks thrown at it. You should challenge somebody. You are greener than your years. Why! you wouldn't come this far, except by day—now, would you?"

"I'd go anywhere, any time," said Sindiga—and Nyamwita laughed. "By night, without a moon, in the rain, I dare make this journey, or any other journey you care to suggest!" he added.

"Yes, my brother's ready any time," defended Nyakiage.

"Ah well, lad!" sighed Nyanguka, and for a moment he seemed to gaze beyond Sindiga into the future. "You appear to have a plucky spirit. Suppose now tomorrow night you go and hang this bracelet on the broken limb of the *siala* tree beyond Maruani's kraal, in the rain-maker's cornfield? You know the tree?—If I find it there at dawn, then you shall feast tomorrow with the *moran*." The moran were the proven heroes in battle, and the word he used was borrowed from the Masai language. The Abagusii had considerable respect for their enemies, the Masais, whose laws forbade the young men of their tribe smoking, drinking, or marrying before their term of military service had been completed.

"But that's nothing," Sindiga declared, answering the warrior's challenge.

"Eh?" exclaimed Nyanguka. "Then take my spear, and choosing a stormy night, go hide it in the thatch of Mainas hut. That would be a feat more worthy of a feast with the *moran*."

"Ready!" declared Sindiga.

"Or look you! If that's too easy, the best thing I can suggest is that you and young Barongo go and rob a Nyaribari kraal." He laughed as he said this, for he did not mean it. Sindiga, notwithstanding, climbed the hill thoughtfully. His girl companions entwined arms round slim shoulders and put their heads together in low conversation.

"He's really big," he heard Nyamwita say to his sister, "and ought to do *something*."

"Oh, he wouldn't kill a chicken!" said Nyakiage, "and it isn't because he's afraid."

"I'm really big, and I'm not afraid, and I *ought* to do something," meditated Sindiga.

His old grandmother, Muraa, stood for a moment to observe the trio before she came forward to greet them. Sindiga, lithe, and strong, and tall, with his young face grimly set; and the two girls bringing up the rear, pretty and serious, discussing no doubt how a little paint would improve the appearance of their guardian.

The old woman waited sufficiently long for Sindiga to have greeted her first had he lacked the sense of propriety, and then ran forward. "Well?" she said affectionately, addressing her grandson. "Well, great lady," Sindiga replied.

Greetings over, they followed the old woman's nimble feet through the gateway and across the cattle enclosure to her hut. Six large huts were set in a ring, and in their center the cattle slept at night. A fence of interlaced branches connected each hut with its neighbor to form a secure enclosure of alternating hut wall and fence.

This circle of huts and fence is called a "kraal." A son may build a hut for his first wife in the circle of his mother's huts, but only to the immediate right of the kraal gateway on entering, or else outside the cattle enclosure. To the right again, and next to her daughter-in-law's hut, in the largest and best hut of the kraal, lives the father's first wife. On the other side of the first wife's hut lives her husband's last and youngest wife, and beyond her hut, in any order, the huts of the remaining wives. If a man has not a kraal of his own already, he builds one when he marries his second wife.

Muraa was the wife of a Bunyeikuma warrior, and Keruo had been her first child. Nyambati, her son-in-

law, was a Kitutu, and Muraa herself was of another Gusii clan.

No Omogusii might marry one of his own clan; nor was it permissible to marry outside the tribe. Marriages of the latter kind did occur, as in the case of Ondieki's father who married a Luo, but the offspring of such marriages were physically, and often morally, inferior to homogeneous Luos or homogeneous Abagusii. A Gusii girl would not consent to marry a man of her own clan, because in such a case her father could not demand cattle for her, and her worth would consequently be nil; and it was every girl's ambition to fetch a high price upon marriage. When a girl marries she ceases to be a member of her parents' clan. It is therefore to her advantage to ingratiate her new parents and her husband's other wives as soon as possible after marriage, for henceforth she belongs to their clan. She is usually made much of by them at first, but rivalries and jealousies commonly creep in as time goes on. The first wife has authority over the rest, and old Muraa enjoyed this distinction.

In front of the low doorway of her hut, the old lady paused, and pointed to a gap in the fence. "See," said she, "where the Nyaribaris broke in two nights ago. They made off with my two best milch cows."

"Why didn't they try the gate?" asked Sindiga.

"It was fastened good and tight and they saw the fence was weak there. My man has not had time to mend it since the day the black bull drove at it and got out. We were not expecting raids.—But there," she said, stooping and entering the hut, "as I've said over and over again, it always pays to be prepared."

The girls entered by the outer door as Sindiga and his grandmother entered by way of the kraal the half of the hut which was divided off for the goats and fowl. The two doorways were so low that they could only be entered by stooping and bending the knees at the same

time. It was necessary, moreover, in stooping, to touch the ground with extended fingers to steady oneself. It will be easily understood that an enemy thus entering would have small chance of coming out alive.

Sindiga followed the old lady through a similar doorway into the living room. To his right as he entered was a dark passage which ran alongside a partitioning wall. It was too dark to see anything in this passage, but he heard the girls as they stooped to enter it from the room at the farther end where the grinding was done. It was pitch dark in the living room.

Muraa said, "Sit in the armchair."

Since all Gusii huts were built and furnished on much the same simple plan, Sindiga had no difficulty in finding it. The old lady stirred the embers of a fire that was nearly out. Nyakiage knelt beside it and by dint of much coaxing and blowing started a blaze, while Muraa sat down on the earth floor and beamed round upon them all.

It was not long before she had to revert to the subject of her recent loss. She put on the fire a pot of *ugali*,[1] and while Nyakiage stirred it, supplied her visitors with details of the theft. When they had been fully informed on this matter she let them shape the conversation themselves. Their chief pleasure at Muraa's was to get her story-telling, for no one—unless it was Nyambati himself—could tell stories better than she. To this end Nyakiage converted herself into a regular question-box, and very soon they had their wish.

Sindiga made himself comfortable in a broad low chair made of interlaced withes; Nyakiage continued to stir the *ugali*, and Nyamwita sat with hands clasped over bare knees listening to Muraa. At the old lady's left as she faced Sindiga was the family bed. Its framework was of heavy timbers, roughly tenoned together, and a network of interlaced creeper took the place of springs.

[1] Native bread (Ki-Swahili).

Its foot was towards the fire. There was one stool in the room to complete the furniture, but it lay turned over in a corner at Sindiga's right. Neither Muraa nor any female would have dreamed of sitting on it. Chairs and stools were for the men only. Muraa and the girls were perfectly contented, and apparently comfortable, sitting on the earth floor. No male could occupy Muraa's place by the fire, this being hers by unalienable right.

A partition, extending from the outer wall towards the center of the hut, helped from the back of Sindiga's chair. Turning at the doorway of the living room it proceeded parallel to the central partition, and formed one wall to the dark passage connecting the living room with the grinding room. The diameter of the hut was about fifteen feet, and the living room was less than one-fourth of the available space. Needless to say, the real "living room" of Gusii natives is out-of-doors. For the first eight or ten years of their lives they sleep at night with their parents on the big bed. As their number increases the bed is enlarged to make room for them. The huts have no windows, and at night practically no ventilation, for wicker doors are drawn across the two entrances and securely tied before the occupants retire. All huts are partitioned off and furnished on the same simple plan, except that sometimes a stool will take the place of the large armchair. Each wife has a hut of her own, but the "father" of the kraal has no particular hut for himself. In whichever hut he happens to be when the food is ready, it is brought to him by the wives who have prepared it. If he is in the cornfield, or visiting a near neighbor, they take it to him there. In the latter case he would, of course, share it with his host and fellow guests. The women themselves dine apart from the men and seem to prefer so doing.

Sindiga sat back in the great chair, and warmed his toes—not that they needed warming, but on the hearthstone was the most convenient place to put them out of

the way. He paid less attention than usual to his grandmother's flow of conversation, for his mind was exercised over Nyanguka's challenge. "If that's too easy," the warrior had said, "I'll have to suggest you and young Barongo go and rob a Nyaribari kraal"—and these very Nyaribaris had raided his grandfather's kraal! What could he do better than accept the challenge?

He was vaguely conscious of the fact that Muraa was telling one of her stories, and every little while he would follow her for a time and then drop back into meditation. If only, he thought, if only he could get those very same cattle back which the Nyaribaris had stolen!—Nyakiage and Nyamwita by this time were thoroughly taken up with Muraa's story. It had to do with Manga, the great cliff of Kanyimbo, Manga—and morals. "—And seeing that it now began to rain heavily," she was saying, "the old woman climbed up to a cave underneath the cliff. And there, in the cave, she found the four children—Nyabuto, Nyaribari, Nyayiem, and Nyamwita."

"Don't say 'Nyamwita!' Say 'Nyanchoka,'" ordered Nyakiage.

"It was *a* Nyamwita," insisted Muraa. "But, very well, if you wish it I will say 'Nyanchoka.' Nyabuto, Nyaribari, Nyayiem, and Nyanchoka stood there with their pots of milk in their hands waiting for the storm to pass. All but Nyabuto pulled faces when the old woman came in, and edged away from her ——"

Sindiga had heard this story many times over, for it is a favorite one among the Abagusii. To this day grown men tell variations of it to each other with amazing relish; and Sindiga would have been as interested as ever had his mind been disengaged.

"'Give me some of your milk to drink,' said the old woman presently to the children. 'Silly old women won't get any of our milk,' said Nyaribari, Nyayiem, and Nyanchoka, all together. Seeing Nyabuto was silent, the

old woman turned to her: 'Give me of *your* milk, Nyabuto,' she said. 'I am hungry and tired, and have a long way to go.' Nyabuto willingly handed over her bowl of milk. After she had drunk the old woman whispered in Nyabuto's ear—'You come outside with me. I will not stay with these inhospitable children.' So Nyabuto went outside, followed by the old woman. The other children began to be afraid, but they could not move from where they stood in the cave. The old woman gazed up at the great cliff towering above her, and waved her arms strangely. With this she cried out loudly:

'Great One! Great One!
Frown on the children.
Great rocks hear!
Great rocks quake and rumble.
Great One! Great One!
Close on the children!'

And forthwith the cliff closed on Nyaribari, Nyayiem, and Nyamwita." "Nyanchoka," corrected Nyakiage. "It *wasn't* Nyanchoka though," said the grandmother; "but as you will.—The cliff closed on Nyaribari, Nyayiem, and Nyanchoka; and the old woman disappeared, leaving Nyabuto all alone and trembling."

Muraa placed the *ugali* before her visitors with a large gourd of sour milk, and continued dramatically:

"When Nyabuto looked round, in place of the broad cavern mouth she saw only a small hole about as large as her two hands. Mustering courage she peered within, but all was darkness. Then she called the names of her companions, and presently from far away inside the cliff she heard voices, but oh! so faint. Nyabuto thought they were begging the old woman's forgiveness ——"

Sindiga continued his soliloquy. If only he could catch the Nyaribaris who had robbed this good woman's kraal! He rolled a lump of stiff *ugali* round his mouth, and glared savagely into the ashes of the fire.

Muraa went on to say how Nyabuto conducted a large

crowd of people to the hole in the cliff face the next morning. They too heard wailing within. When they called Nyaribari's name, a small monkey appeared at the aperture and jumped out upon them. The villagers went again the next day, and cried, "Where are you, Nyaribari, Nyayiem, and Nyanchoka?" And faintly they heard Nyanchoka's voice calling. She said her two companions had both been turned into monkeys, and that she was there alone—and a second monkey jumped out upon them. On the third day no voice answered them, but a third small monkey jumped out of the aperture and stood jabbering at them from a little distance off. To this day one or another of the monkeys may always be seen scampering about beneath the cliff, and as likely as not they will stand on their hind legs, and try to tell you how they came to be changed.

It was late in the afternoon when the young people left their grandmother's abode. Dutifully Sindiga conducted the girls back to their homes underneath the cliff, and then hurried off in search of Barongo. He lost no time acquainting his friend of Muraa's loss and his ambition to recover the cows if possible. When he had finished, Barongo exclaimed: "I have an idea, but let us hurry; there is no time to lose. I believe we shall at least be able to discover where the thief lives who stole the cattle."

"Why, what do you propose that we do?" asked Sindiga, surprised at Barongo's show of confidence.

"I'll tell you as we go along," his friend replied. "We shall not get back till after dark, and we ought to take our hunting spears with us."

Ondieki met them as they were starting out. "Where are you two going?" he demanded surlily.—A few months before he had taken part for the first time in his life in a raid against the Luos. He had not got very close up to the enemy, but the fact of having been in

the company of experienced fighters had made him extraordinarily conceited.

"We mean to track Nyaribari robbers, and find out where they have taken Muraa's cows," Barongo vouchsafed in answer to his question. "Won't you come with us?"

"You can keep company with a Lumbwa if you like. You won't catch me," he sneered, adding—"Besides, Muraa's no friend of mine." Saying which, he turned and left them.

"So you think you know where the cattle are?" asked Sindiga.

Barongo told how that morning a cow had been seen to escape across the Nyaribari border into Kitutu, followed by a party of armed Nyaribaris. She had swung away over hill and dale in the direction of Bunyeikuma, and her manner of going was as if she had traveled that way before, and knew her way home. Barongo, returning from Boguche early that morning, had witnessed her capture from behind an *omotobo* bush.

"I reckon she did not make for Bunyeikuma by accident," Barongo concluded. "She objected strongly enough to going back, and was still a long way from Nyaribari at noon—and still giving trouble."

"Then your plan is to catch the Nyaribaris up, and see where they make for with the cow?"

"Exactly," said Barongo, and went on to mention a peculiarity about the cow's horns which he had noticed. This enabled Sindiga to identify her positively with one he had often milked at his grandmother's.

Very hopefully the two youths hurried on their way, and just before dusk were gratified to see the Nyaribaris about half a mile ahead of them, chasing a red cow across a broad meadow—without a doubt one of Muraa's. At the sight of the warriors' glittering spears, the boys dropped into the grass. Tracking armed men was a weightier proposition than chasing deer, but under

cover of the thick bush they crept warily forward. In the growing darkness they followed the Nyaribaris across Nyamosaka Hill, till there loomed before them on the darkening horizon the outlines of a kraal. Into this kraal they saw the cow driven. They lay still in the grass till the warriors themselves had disappeared inside one of the huts of the kraal. Then Sindiga made as if he would follow them.

"Had we not better return now and get help?" said Barongo.

"No," Sindiga objected. "A dozen Kitutus on this side of the border at night would stand no better chance of getting away with their lives than two if an alarm was raised. Let's get up closer and listen, and then we'll decide what to do."

So they crawled up through the grass and listened. They heard a hubbub of conversation coming mainly from the hut into which the warriors had entered. They had finished telling of the capture apparently, and were discussing how to avoid the cow's escaping a second time.

"Better herd them both on the Bunjare border. The Bunyeikuma folk have friends near here in Kanyimbo. Take them to Bunjare."

"Tomorrow they go!" exclaimed several voices in accord.

"Tonight, tonight they go!" declared Sindiga under his breath; adding to Barongo, "Let's lie quiet till they turn in."

It was long before the Nyaribaris retired, and the two boys shivered from the cold as well as the excitement.

"It's death if we're caught," Barongo whispered.

"We'd best not think about that," answered Sindiga, and there was silence for a time.

About midnight, when all was quiet, Sindiga said to Barongo: "Now you keep a sharp lookout while I un-

fasten the gateway. If you see or hear anything, lie low, and throw something in my direction."

Sindiga had no trouble at all unfastening the gateway. Two cows immediately stepped outside the kraal and quietly commenced grazing near by. The other cows did not move. Those Sindiga had let out did not seem to realize where they were till he approached them; then they made off down the hill in the direction of Bunyeikuma. Sindiga lost no time following them, and as he did so he noticed that the moon was nearing the horizon.

Barongo crouched low, listening for the slightest sound. He thought he heard a murmur from within, and pressed his ear closer to the hut wall. Satisfied at length that the inmates were all sound asleep, he got up and quietly walked away.

Looking back, after a while, he saw the moon grow to the size of the kraal gateway, and disappear behind the hill. That instant a cow lowed, and silhouetted against the fading light Barongo saw *several* cows grazing outside the kraal. In his haste, Sindiga had omitted to close the gateway. Barongo hurried off down the hill, expecting every moment to hear an alarm raised.

He stumbled forward in the growing darkness, listening intently. The moon sank perpendicularly, and a chill wind rose. In a few moments the night was as dark as the caves in the cliff. Above the screeching of crickets Barongo heard the lowing of cattle back on the hillside. Black clouds swept up from the east and hid the light of the stars. The wind shrieked and whistled in Barongo's ears, and cold streaks of rain struck his face and chest. He staggered forward, planting his feet down heavily, as though trampling underfoot unseen foes. The cold drops of rain, to his imagination, became spears that stung without power to wound. He began to fancy he had a charmed life. The spirits of the dead, maybe, hovered protectingly over him.

But where in the blackness ahead was Sindiga? Barongo had crossed the valley, and believed himself to be ascending Nyamosaka Hill towards the Kitutu border, but he had turned back upon his tracks without knowing it. Suddenly he heard voices ahead of him. Then, simultaneously with a blinding lightning flash, there came a clap of thunder which drowned the voices. He hesitated as to his direction. Soon, after a little more stumbling forward, he fell into a tangle of thick bush and creeper. When he staggered on again it was with the realization that he was lost—lost in enemy country, with enemies even at that moment hunting him down.

Sindiga waited for Barongo until the moon dropped. The cows stood still of their own accord in the darkness, curious possibly to find out whether or not they were being followed. When the storm broke upon him in its fury, Sindiga realized that there was small possibility of his friend taking the same course as himself. A network of narrow paths covered the hill, and Barongo—he concluded—would be following his sense of direction, and making for Kitutu by whatever path he happened to strike. The cattle grew impatient, and he followed them. They were intent on getting back to Bunyeikuma, but by keeping to one side, Sindiga succeeded in driving them over in the direction of Kanyimbo—the country beneath the cliff. He did not wish to follow them through enemy country all the way to Muraa's alone. At times he experienced no little difficulty keeping up with them. Passing by some Kitutu huts at dawn, he called out for help, which was readily forthcoming. A crowd of men, women, and children came to his assistance, enabling him to reach Kanyimbo with the cattle just as the shadow of Manga was receding from Nyamosaka Hill.

It was a shock to Sindiga to find Barongo had not arrived before him. He left Nyambati calling the "sons

of the cliff" together, in readiness to effect Barongo's rescue in case he had been taken captive, and himself made a bee line back to the border.

Recalling with horror the summary vengeance measured out to cattle thieves by his own clan, he raced along the narrow pathway with sore misgivings. If Barongo had been captured, the possibility of his life being spared and his being held for ransom was exceedingly small. If his blood had not already been spilt on the green pastures of Nyanchwa Hill, he was probably a prisoner in Nyaribari expecting death at any moment.

Sindiga fell to wondering what he would do should he find Barongo a captive, tied to some Nyaribari warrior. Perhaps the "stocks" had been his fate, and his feet—skinned and bleeding where they had been forced through the small holes—were now imprisoned in a heavy block of wood. In this case the Kitutus might offer to buy him back. Or they might capture a Nyaribari elder[2] and hold him prisoner till Barongo was released.

His reflections were interrupted in a striking fashion. There was a sound of voices, and Sindiga had barely time to drop into a near-by bush before a band of Nyaribari warriors hove into sight. With the foremost walked Barongo himself—but not with the mien of a prisoner. A young Nyaribari, fully armed, strode at his side, chatting affably with him and now and again putting a hand lightly upon his shoulder. Another ran alongside the crowd, gesticulating wildly and screaming: "He is my prisoner, give him to me!" Sindiga watched and saw the rest turn upon this one, and hound him away to the rear. They came to a halt within a few yards of Sindiga. Then suddenly the foremost Nyaribari stepped away from Barongo's side. Flinging his arms upward, he cried: "Go!"—and the other warriors did likewise. Flinging their arms upward and forward, as

[2] An old man qualified by his years to speak on native councils.

though repudiating their captive, they yelled "Go!" with one voice.

"It is well thus," replied Barongo, extending a hand in the direction of his liberators. The tall Nyaribari, who had first bade him depart, gesticulated with his hands. "It is the will of God," he said. The rest, who never took their eyes off the Kitutu till he was out of sight, said, "Even so." Then one by one they turned and followed Barongo's deliverer along the narrow path. Sindiga watched them till they were out of sight, and then, as one in a trance, got up and hurried after his friend.

IV

"THE MAD ELDER"

BARONGO'S STORY WAS AS STRANGE AN ACCOUNT of a bid for freedom as has ever been told. Battered by wind and rain he had stumbled through bush and brake four hours, losing paths as often as he struck them. The prevailing wind came from over the escarpment to the east, bringing with it the rain from the Indian Ocean. During the night the wind had veered round, confusing utterly Barongo's sense of direction. Some wakeful Nyaribaris had heard the cattle straying, and had roused the whole hillside. From every kraal the natives had turned out, prepared to repel a raid. Suddenly in the darkness Barongo had sensed that he was in the vicinity of a kraal. The conviction had grown upon him that instead of having crossed the valley he had turned back onto Nyanchwa Hill. Then a voice had accosted him. "Who are you?" Summoning his presence of mind, and speaking as best he could with a Nyaribari accent, Barongo had replied: "Whist! Do your joking when there are no enemies about!" With that he had backed away in the darkness, only to run into the eaves of a hut. As he stood hesitating which way to turn next a hand had gripped his arm.

"Who are you, anyway?" said a voice. "Your tactics are extremely queer."

Barongo answered without hesitation: "Stop your joking, friend, and keep moving! The Kitutu *moran* are here, as thick on the hillside as soldier-ants."

Another voice urged: "Hold him a minute if he won't tell you his name. Here comes Buto with a torch."

Before that individual could reach them the torch had become a mere flicker, for a slight rain was still falling. Buto hastily inverted it, and it lasted sufficiently long to give Barongo away.

He was cuffed, and prodded, and questioned as far as Buto's hut, where he spent the remainder of the night under vigilant guard.

Not the slightest chance of escape offered itself till dawn, when his warder became interested in a discussion going on outside. Several warriors were grouped around the entrance of the hut discussing the escape of Barongo's accomplices. The hut was in a dilapidated condition, and Barongo calculated the walls were not overstrong. He waited until his guard became animated in the presentation of his viewpoint. Then, when he had reached a high pitch of eloquence, Barongo sprang silently to his feet. Needless to say, he had been disarmed, and weapons would have been no use to him in his circumstances. The plaster had fallen away from a part of the wall, and the sticks that reinforced it were visible, the weaker for long exposure. Wrenching a couple away Barongo threw a shoulder against the aperture he had made. He knew that if the wall did not give to his first assault his only hope of escape was gone. Happily the hut had stood many years, and many of the sticks supporting the walls were insect-eaten. Barongo fell bodily through snapping wood and falling plaster. Leaping to his feet, he raced headlong for the bush, with the irate guard close at his heels.

Barongo had no start, but he could run. He was leaving his pursuer behind, when a spear hurtled past him. An armed mob was running alongside of the guard. A second spear sang through the air, causing his blood to run cold. Expecting death, Barongo hoped against hope that his fleetness of foot would save him. Other warriors

appeared in the bush towards which he was heading, and he was forced to alter his direction. Warriors who had spent the biggest part of the night searching the bush for Kitutu raiders, seemed now to spring from behind every tree. Spears fell to Barongo's right and left. He realized that he was surrounded.

His foes were closing in on every side, when deliverance came to him from an unexpected quarter. Outside a hut, but within the narrowing circle of excited men, an infant clamored for its mother. Memory of an ancient but universally respected custom flashed across Barongo's mind. That infant might be his salvation! Springing forward, he caught it up in his arms and faced round on his pursuers. He saw them stick their spears at once into the ground. Only the exasperated guard drew up in front of him breathless and shook a spear menacingly in his face. When he hesitated to thrust the spear home, Barongo knew that his presence of mind had saved him. A big Nyaribari stepped up and pushed the guard aside.

"Peace!" he said. "This youth shall go free. He shall not die. See! He claims my protection, and I am powerless to refuse it." Plainly he was the father of the child Barongo held in his arms.

"Who menaces this Kitutu," he continued, "menaces me and mine—my father, my brothers, and my cousins, who make up a great family of Nyaribari fighters. He is under my protection."[1]

Barongo had not cried out in the face of death, but the tension over, he felt himself grow weak. His knees trembled, and the child grew heavy all at once. It had ceased its wail, and with its small arms round Barongo's

[1] The intervention of the father of the child on Barongo's behalf was prompted by a belief, common in all parts of Kavirondo, that, when mercy is sued in this manner and refused, the spirit of the supplicant invariably avenges itself on the child and the child's family.

neck, it looked back at its father and laughed. Life was such a huge joke, and the grown-ups such funny folk! When its father took it, it stretched out its arms for Barongo!

". . . And so he conducted you as far as the border, and then let you go?" exclaimed Sindiga.

"Yes, and conversed with me all the way as though he had been my uncle!" replied Barongo. "But first he had food prepared, and ate with me out of the same basket. It was strange being escorted back to the border by the very men who a while before had chased me with spears, and very nearly deprived me of my life."

Sindiga marveled. At Barongo's request he told of his own less adventurous escape, of the vicissitudes of the night's journey in the pouring rain, and how the cows had been secured temporarily in Nyambati's kraal.

Sunlight was chasing shadow across the green slopes leading up to the Great Cliff when the two youths reached Bigendi Hill. If Africa was in the shadow, just then those two knew nothing of it. The danger was past, and they thought only of how life was opening out for them. The African marigold blossomed golden under their feet, and would continue to blossom after they had passed. Storms only left the landscape clearer. They felt how good it was to be alive. Barongo had neither quailed before the storm nor cringed before his captors; and now, Nyaribari, and the night, and his misadventure were all left behind. Life, and the green undulations of Kitutu, lay before him.

These youths knew there existed a God who had breathed this life and the love of it into their souls. Other races had inhabited these hills before the Abagusii, and had passed away; but, flourishing above the ground whence the pottery of the ancients had been dug, were the manifest creations of a God. His abode they deemed to be afar off. They thought the spirits of their ancestors, good and malevolent, were ever nearer

to them than their Creator. It was not their faith in a God that accounted for their buoyant tread.

Doubtless the sense of danger past had something to do with it. More potent than anything else, however, was their live hope for the future—for their own futures, and the future of their race. The African native has a faculty for hoping. In the darkness both boys had hoped that the spirits of their ancestors were concerned with their welfare. Surrounded by enemies, the hope of rescue or escape had made Barongo cunning. In the worst extremity he would have fallen back on the hope of seeing Sindiga again before he died.

Hope for the future gilds every cloud that crosses the Kaffir horizon. Strange to say, the word denoting "agreement" in Ekegusii is commonly used to express "faith," "hope," *and* "love"! Perhaps it is because they seek to be in agreement with, and to place their faith and their hope in those whom they have learned to love. Certain it is they would understand the Scripture: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." But in the interval of waiting for a better Faith and a nobler love than they have hitherto known, it is hope, buoyant hope that lightens the hearts of young and old. Often it is a vague, uncertain hope, as of a child who believes in the possibility of some good thing being hid in a father's hand—but hope it is. And regnant hope it was, allied to Kaffir love, that knit together the souls of Sindiga and Barongo and lent elasticity to their tread.

Bigendi Hill is a low extension of Nyamosaka. Between both and Nyanchwa Hill runs a tributary of the Riana stream which the youths leapt without difficulty. Bigendi Hill used to be thickly wooded with *omotembe* trees, but the crest of Nyamosaka to the east was grazing ground. The ridge formed by these two hills was a sort of no man's land, lying between Kitutu and Nyaribari. Nyanchwa Hill, where the family, or clan, of Nyaribari had established themselves, lay to the south.

A family feud had led to the Nyaribaris breaking away from Kitutu, and the Kitutus had made many unsuccessful attempts to compel the rebels to return. The Nyaribaris had actually been driven from Nyabururu Hill, where they had first settled, and for many years had lived in subjugation among the Kitutus. Ever since their escape from Kitutu, they had been regarded as alien. The two clans were too closely related to intermarry, and in the course of time they had become sworn enemies. Extraordinary bitterness entered into their quarrels and their common origin was soon well-nigh forgotten. To Barongo and Sindiga the Nyaribaris were traitors—the descendants of men who had no love for the land that gave them birth. The Nyaribaris, on the other hand, considered themselves a wronged but righteous scion of the Gusii tribe, warring against impostors and tyrants for liberty and "the right to live."

The two youths were crossing the Bigendi rise when a crowd of Kitutus, gathered on the crest of Nyamosaka, attracted their attention. At the same moment Nyambati's search party hove into sight, headed by the old man himself. Hearty and loud were the congratulations the boys received. Nyanguka, who had worried considerably about his young friend, had been beside himself with joy on hearing from Nyambati's lips of Sindiga's safety. He greeted the pair more boisterously than the rest. Barongo had to tell again the whole story of his escape, and many times was he made to retell it that day, to be applauded loudly each time.

Presently Nyambati asked, pointing with his spear to the gathering on Nyamosaka Hill, "What is the crowd doing over yonder?"

"We were just going over to see when you came up," Sindiga said. "There appears to be a good deal of fun going on, but the crowd is dispersing."

They climbed the hill together. In the center of the crowd was an old man. He wore a large calfskin in

place of the usual goatskin, and on his head was a straw hat worked with seashells. Besides his rare headgear he wore sections of elephant tusks on the upper parts of his arms. Around him he had built a dozen or twenty miniature huts. They ringed in no cattle kraals, but stood by themselves, here and there, and fairly close together. He was in the act of plucking dry grass and thatching them when the newcomers arrived on the scene. Having thatched them all, he stood erect and looked around on the crowd.

"Thus, even thus," said he, "shall houses one day be built on Nyamosaka—houses without cattle kraals. The strong houses of conquerors shall they be."

The crowd laughed incredulously.

"Who will the conquerors be?" asked Nyanguka, not without an amused smile.

"They are a race as white as the hail. They wear white clothing and eat white bread. When you see their whiteness you will recognize that I have spoken the truth."

"He's mad," said one of the bystanders.

"He's drunk," said another.

Barongo turned to Sindiga: "He means that the Arabs will come and fight us."

"Let them try!" exclaimed Nyanguka. "They shall eat thunder."

The old man looked at him, and gravely said: "The Arabs will never come to fight the Abagusii. My prophecy is concerned with a more terrible race than the Arabs. Watch!"

He placed a fire-block before them. This was a small, dry piece of wood, with a hole in the center about half an inch deep. Taking a small stick, he caused it to rotate rapidly in the hole by rubbing it between the palms of his hands. (With these two implements the Abagusii are accustomed to producing fire as often as they fail to get hot embers from some neighbor's hearth.) In about a minute the end of the stick was produced smoking.

Plunging it into a handful of dry grass the old man blew it gently and soon created a blaze.

"Watch!" he repeated, and running with the grass torch from one miniature hut to another he set fire to them all.

"Thus," said he, "shall invaders burn the dwellings of the Abagusii. The woman shall bewail her lot who has not a man child."

"Tell us something else," said a bystander, scoffing.

"I can," said the old man. "Your womenfolk will turn out and will congregate on Bigendi Hill with the women of Nyaribari, and of Bassi, of Mugirango, Kitutu, and Bunjare, and the women of every other Gusii clan. They will come from far and near with trays and baskets, and will gather mushrooms on Bigendi Hill."

"Mushrooms on Bigendi Hill?" laughed Sindiga incredulously.

"Even on Bigendi Hill," the old man replied seriously; and the crowd laughed uproariously, for the hill was thickly wooded. The louder they laughed the more serious grew the old man. "My people!" he exclaimed, stretching out his hands. "You laugh because you cannot see into the future as I can. But mark what I say. The Abagusii have multiplied, but they have no strength. They have made laws, but justice is perverted. You squabble and fight among yourselves, and forget the arts of peace. Your old men feed themselves and are drunken. They neglect to instruct their children. Alas! you Abagusii! You forget the past and care not for the future. A strong nation—yea! a nation in league with the spirits—will come. *They* will teach you; and what you have failed to do yourselves they will do for you."

"There's some truth in what he says," declared Nyambati. "The Abagusii are a divided people and surrounded by enemies. The quarrels that prevent us forgetting the art of war rob us of our bravest sons."

Nyanguka flared up then. "Till Nyaribari is subdued let us not consider our losses!" he exclaimed.

No one took old Zakawa (for that was his name) very seriously. Neither would any of the bystanders have dreamt of maltreating him. In Gusii one can teach what one pleases and keep friendship with the highest in the land. Lawbreakers, whether through folly or ignorance, are punished unmercifully; but one can be unconventional, eccentric, or insane, and so long as one respects the laws of the land, remain an honorable member of society.

Zakawa often hinted at past glory, denouncing the time in which he lived. "Where are the good old days?" he would say. "The Abagusii are not what they were. They are not at one. The spirit of hospitality is going. The young men think only of their paint, and the maidens sing foolish songs. Give us songs with fewer cobwebs in them! Why do the young men shirk their fields? Why do the maidens leave their grinding to run after the young men? The Abagusii are altogether lost. Where today shall we look for a leader like Manyanta? He brought his flock to these hills and instructed them. In those days the Abagusii cultivated large fields, for they were strong. They had more food than they needed. The Luos and Lumbwas came beseeching food of them. They sold their children to the Abagusii for grain. . . . Alas! You travel backward. You copy your enemies, and introduce strange customs. When your cattle multiplied you became lazy. You say to yourselves: 'We will feed on meat.' But the plague shall take your cattle, and a strange nation shall carry away your sons.

". . . I give you a sign," Zakawa continued. "I have three daughters who are yet unmarried. They are fair to look upon. Many young men have sought them in marriage, but I resolutely refused. Zakawa does not want cattle. He wants his words to be received. Therefore till all that he has said has come to pass his three

daughters shall not marry. They may grow old, but they shall not marry. No, not until time reveals the truth of Zakawa's sayings!"

Standing behind Sindiga and Barongo was a burly Omogusii of middle age. His long hair was matted with red clay. His broad chest and square shoulders shone with grease. His arms and knees and leather apron were dusty with wood-ash, and he leaned upon a heavy spear. This was no lesser personage than the Kitutu iron-smelter. Plainly he stood somewhat in awe of the old prophet; whenever Zakawa became vehement, the smelter blinked and shifted his position. He almost dropped when the old man turned and pointed straight at him.

"The day will come," declared Zakawa, "when you will be forced to leave off smelting; and when you resign your occupation no other will take it up."

The smelter nudged Sindiga. "I have a fear," he said, "that Zakawa's words are true."

"But if true," Sindiga expostulated, "where will the Abagusii procure their spears? Does he think the tribes will make peace?"

The search party had broken up by this time, and those who remained of the men Nyambati had brought with him were taking leave of each other preparatory to departure. Nyambati had several calls to make in that locality, so the youths left the hill in company with the smelter.

"Does your way lie past the smith's?" he asked them.

"Our homes lie under the cliff," returned Sindiga. "If you will come with us, and help dispose of the meal Kinanga will have prepared, we shall be glad to accompany you to the smith's after we have eaten." To this proposal the smelter readily assented.

Some word of Zakawa's stuck in each of their minds to become food for endless speculation in after years. The smelter reflected that the quality of his work did

not come up to his father's, but drew comfort from the declaration: "When you resign your occupation no other will take it up." Gusii spears were inferior in the quality of their iron and in workmanship to Masai spears, but they served their purpose. While the smelter was wondering if ever the Abagusii would be able to dispense with his services, Sindiga pondered the old man's assertion that the spirit of hospitality was going. Barongo turned over in his mind the prophet's complaint that the natives were not only forgetting the past, but had no care for the future. He was destined years afterward to quote Zakawa's words when contending with Sindiga over the desirability of Christian Missions in Gusii. All three puzzled in vain over the prophecy of mushrooms on Bigendi Hill, and the race as white as the hail that should burn their villages and carry away their sons.

"I have to call here," said the smelter as they drew up alongside a small hut, standing by itself near the narrow pathway. "Wait for me."

He dived into the hut, and reappeared almost instantly with a heavy lump of iron ore in his hands. He constructed a small circular cushion of grass, and placing this on his head balanced the ore thereon. His hoe was broken, he said, and he was taking the ore to the smith's to get a new one made. Only a smith could fashion a hoe; but, skillful as he was in his own trade, the smith knew nothing of smelting. Smithing and smelting were quite distinct, though interdependent professions. A native in need of an iron implement dug the ore for himself, and took it in a basket to the smelter's for refinement. The smelter retained a portion of the ore as payment for his work. The iron was then passed on to the smith, who fashioned it into an axe, a hoe, or a spearhead, as desired, receiving in payment a basket of grain, a fowl, or a pot of beer. One or two individuals in a clan had a monopoly of these two professions,

which were handed down from father to son. The Abagusii did not make pottery, but markets existed along the Gusii border where the Luos brought their earthenware water-pots and cooking jars as an exchange for iron implements, including spearheads.

The smelter was not the only visitor at Nyambati's that day. Kinanga's home-brewed beer was no small attraction at all times, and everyone was eager to hear the details of the boys' adventures across the border. Barongo's home was likewise besieged with visitors, and for several days the people of Kanyimbo gave themselves over to feasting and merrymaking. There was little work to be done in the fields at that season, and any excuse for visiting and drinking is welcomed in Africa. Kinanga daily beamed round upon a houseful of visitors, and almost forgot that Sindiga was not her own son.

When Ondieki was informed concerning the exploit of the two, he pretended scepticism. "I warrant the cows escaped themselves, and were making for Bunyeikuma when they got turned aside here," he said. "Why! they have not even brought back with them a spear to testify that they crossed the border!" Even Barongo's submissive nature revolted when he heard of this taunt. Straightway he sought out Ondieki and challenged him to go and spy out the number of cattle they had left in the Nyaribari kraal. Ondieki declined to receive challenges from such a precocious stripling; whereat Sindiga challenged him to a wrestling bout. They engaged forthwith, and Sindiga withstood Ondieki's attempts to throw him till they were parted by the older *moran.*

V

THE BORDER RAID

"WHAT THOUGHT YOU OF THE FUN YESTERDAY?"—The speaker was a lithe, young herd-boy, and the ring in his voice suggested unusual excitement. He was considerably younger than the son of old Nyambati, and so was his companion. From under long eyelashes his dark eyes searched his friend's face for a hint as to the thoughts that were passing through his mind. The boys were standing on the very edge of the escarpment, looking down at the close network of paths and clustered kraals below them.

"Well, what thought you of it?" the first to speak repeated, his large eyes glistening eloquently.

"What particular fun?" the other replied.

"Why, Sindiga's encounter with Ondieki."

"To be sure, I think the jackal will feel the porcupine's quills."

"Brother!—Say rather the young lion has broken the hyena's heart. Ondieki was getting the worst of it when the *moran* parted them."

"Sindiga is too rash," the other replied. "Ondieki has seen border fighting, which Sindiga has not. Fighters like Ongati and Nyanguka will have him to the front of the first skirmish after this, and there he will have either to prove his valor or feed enemy spears."

A commotion in the direction both were looking arrested their attention and brought their argument to a close. Outside a kraal was gathered a crowd of young Kitutus, carrying spears and shields. Their voices were

raised in an altercation so sharp that it was attracting the attention of a group of white-haired elders. These old men presently drew near and appeared to confer with the younger men. Suddenly the crowd divided, and the boys on the cliff saw an agile young warrior jump forward and intercept a bigger man who was about to enter the kraal. The next instant they saw the latter's shield and spear wrenched out of his grasp and flung high over a thick hedge into the churned-up mud of the kraal.

"Well done, boy!"—It was the stentorian voice of old Nyambati, who appeared on the scene just in time to witness his son's impetuous act; no other voice could have carried with the same clearness up to where the two herd-boys were standing.

"Sindiga has thrown 'the coward's shield'—and that means a fight!" exclaimed the boy with the long eyelashes.

They hastily made for the valley, which was the only break in the face of a cliff over six miles long. It formed a pass leading from the pasture lands of the escarpment down to the villages and fields beneath the cliff. At the end of the valley the boys entered a dense wood of low trees hung with creepers. Here they lost sight of the crowd of Kitutus for a time. The wood extended along the base of the cliff as far as old Maruani's kraal. Presently the boys heard cries which told them plainly some sort of a contest was already taking place.

Criticized by the bystanders for applauding his son's conduct, Nyambati had called for a staff and shield contest between the two young men. This was in the nature of an ordinary fencing bout. The participants in such contests ply their staves as they would spears in actual warfare, thrusting and parrying till one of them is adjudged "killed" by the unanimous vote of the elders.

Nyambati held that his son was justified in assuming the upper hand and refusing to allow Ondieki to enter

the kraal armed. By so doing Sindiga had accused Ondieki of cowardice. Good! Why hadn't Machuki done it, or some other one of the bystanders, Nyambati wanted to know? Wasn't Ondieki a big, blustering coward, and didn't everybody know it?

The warriors knew it all right, but they also knew that Ondieki's father had medicine; and since they had no particular quarrel with Ondieki, they did not see why they should "call down Manga to fall on them" by foolishly interfering with the son of a wizard. They feared greatly for Sindiga, and would have prevented the staff and shield contest as they had the wrestling bout the day before, if the elders had not given their consent.—Apparently the old men were less superstitious concerning the powers of diviners than the younger men.

Sindiga won a signal victory over Ondieki in the staff and shield contest, thereby proving to the satisfaction of the savage intellects of the crowd his unquestionable right to dispute Ondieki's persistent assumption of superiority. His triumph was due as much to his opponent's wasting fury as to his own wonderful agility. The two herd-boys reached the spot in time to see only the finish.

That Ondieki had been defeated by a warrior who had never taken part in actual warfare was regarded as a huge disgrace, and fears of his father the soothsayer were forgotten in acclaiming Sindiga. Henceforth he was to be a general favorite, admitted into the society of men "like Ongati and Nyanguka," fighters who feared nothing on earth—except medicine men.

A few days later a great feast was prepared by the old men of Kanyimbo. Two fine bullocks were killed in Maruani's kraal. The meat was roasted out of doors and eaten almost raw, and the blood was served up with the inward parts in baskets smeared with clay. A spe-

cial delicacy, devoured with great gusto by the bravest warriors, was the fat humps of the bullocks.

Sindiga and Barongo were invited to feast with the *moran* for the first time in their lives, and it would not be truthful to say they failed to enjoy it. To be allowed to take part in this feast of blood, fat, and entrails, was a mark of special favor. Ondieki was not invited. His reluctance to accept Barongo's challenge, and his defeat by Sindiga after being first deprived of his shield, made it necessary for him to distinguish himself by some courageous action before he could again feast in company with brave men.

The valiant ones gathered that evening in a large hut adjacent to Maruani's kraal to discuss plans for a raid on Nyaribari. A powerful drug known as bhang was smoked to excite the fighting instincts. Sindiga and Barongo had perforce to smoke with the rest, or be declared unfit to associate with the *moran*. It was expected that having had all these honors heaped upon them by the martial heroes of Kanyimbo, the two youths would seize the opportunity of distinguishing themselves in the proposed attack on the rebellious Nyaribari clan.

Gatherings took place that same evening in many other huts, where bhang was smoked as a matter of course, and all was done that could be done to encourage warlike sentiment. Old men twanged harps and sang of heroic deeds. In the course of their singing they extolled the bravery of certain warriors and deplored the cowardice of others. All whom they named were excited by what they heard to prove their valor and merit the bards' praises.

Sindiga did not enter into the pleasures of bhang smoking with the same abandon as the rest. He was manifestly preoccupied. Finally, without giving any explanations, he rose and disappeared into the night.

Sindiga's mind had been exercised considerably over

two unusual occurrences. First a half-burned stick of wood had disappeared one evening from a fire kindled by Maruani's faithful Kemunto—so at any rate Kemunto had declared. Maruani's other wives had laughed at her story, but the following morning a sheep, which had spent the night in her hut, was found lacking a tail. Sindiga had heard some old men discussing these mysterious happenings. They had said that some daring Lumbwa had risked his life to get possession of that half-burned stick of wood and that sheep's tail, and that whoever he was he would hold those trophies up among his people as proofs that the fighting men of Kanyimbo were heavy sleepers. On this particular night they all happened to be thoroughly awake, but absorbed discussing the projected raid on Nyaribari. Sindiga, hating the Lumbwas with a fierce hatred, had sat nervously half the night through dreaming dreams of vengeance on Lumbwa spies. The sound of a dry twig snapping in the rear of the hut had startled him, and this had been his reason for leaving the company.

Silently he crept round the hut under the low eave, but saw no one. This puzzled him; no inoffensive person surely, thought he, would remain thus in hiding. Could his imagination have tricked him? The more he thought about it the surer he felt that a human footfall had occasioned the sound he had heard. He strode about in the bush, eyes and ears alert to penetrate the mystery, but in vain. Might some animal have been responsible for the snapping of the twig after all? Sindiga quickly dismissed the idea; had it been a hyena or any other animal, he would have heard it as it made off into the bush; but only dead silence had greeted him.

It was little more than a stone's throw to his father's kraal, and thither along a well-beaten track he made his way. The old man had just retired.

Old Nyambati heartily commended his son's watchfulness, and listened thoughtfully to all he had to say.

When Sindiga had finished, he declared his belief that in all probability the Lumbwas were in Gusii already, and waiting for an opportune hour to make their attack. He knew their methods of warfare as well as any Kitutu living.

"They are after cattle, and intend probably to make off with all they can while our *moran* are engaged with the Nyaribaris," Nyambati said.—Notwithstanding, he thought it best to refrain from raising an alarm on such slight grounds.

"Come with me," he commanded, taking down his heavy Masai spear from where it hung beneath the loft over his bed. He stood for a moment in the firelight and ran his fingers along its edge. Gripping the shaft in his right hand, he smiled; then he shook it, and thrilled as he did so with the memories of past fights. He hoped fervently that his conjectures might prove correct.

By the light of the moon they investigated the rear of the hut, where the *moran* were still smoking bhang. Sleep was no part of their program that night.

Sindiga experienced no difficulty in locating the dry stick which had been the cause of the snapping sound he had heard. The old man examined it closely, and on his knees made a close survey of the ground near by. Then he turned to the thick bush in the rear of the hut and observed where it had been recently brushed aside. Going slowly, and examining bush and pathway as he went along, he proceeded in the direction of the spring. The mud banks of the stream below had been churned up by cattle, but Nyambati's sharp eyes were able to detect footprints newly made. He examined them with great care, and had barely finished when the moon sank below the horizon.

"A light-footed Lumbwa," he declared then, "lacking three toes: knows this spot as well as any native: slipped down the cliff yonder, and stopped here to drink. I imagine he waited behind that bush while the

women drew water, and then followed the last one up to the kraal. That would have been Kemunto herself. Up at the kraal he listened to your plans, and probably learned the names of several of the womenfolk."

"What use would the names of our womenfolk be to them, Nyambati?" Sindiga regretted the question as soon as he had asked it, for a dark shade spread over the old man's countenance.

Bitterly came his reply: "The Lumbwas are snakes. They listen for the names of the women and girls so as to be able to call them by name from their hiding places when the battle goes in their favor. The wives and daughters run out thinking their husbands and brothers call, but they run, as Keruo your mother did, into the arms of our enemies." He gave vent to an exclamation of anger, and after a brief pause added: "You, Sindiga, must avenge Keruo's death."

Sindiga heard, but did not answer. He was determined some day to avenge Keruo; but, as he stood there in the dark, a horrible fear returned and gripped him. Was he in sooth Nyambati's son, or merely the instrument of the old man's vengeance? Kinanga, in her tempestuous moods, had often called him a Lumbwa. It was Ondieki's favorite taunt, and the opinion of not a few of the villagers. What if, in avenging Keruo, he should be unfortunate enough to kill a brother—or even his own father? He grew sick at the thought. Then Nyambati's voice sounded in his ear again.—After all, he loved Nyambati and hated the Lumbwas. He would fulfill his destiny; and that destiny was governed by his affection for the old man who called him "son." To all intents and purposes he was a true son of Manga, a lover of Gusii, and an implacable enemy of the tribe that had wronged Nyambati.

"Dawn is near, lad," repeated the old man. "When were the *moran* to start for Nyaribari?"

"They have left by now," Sindiga answered, adding:

"I expect I ought to be after them to bring them back."

Nyambati grasped his arm. "Wait!" he said. "I heard a footfall on the cliff. If the Lumbwas are here and in numbers you must stay and help me. Did not our men plan to be at Nyamosaka by dawn?"

"I believe they had decided that before I left them," replied Sindiga.

"Then it is too late to think about bringing them back." He had laid his ear against the wall of the cliff. "I thought so, the Lumbwas are on the move. They are passing overhead: still passing.—Now they halt.—Listen! they are in consultation. Their guide cannot be sure in the dark of the way down, for they have already gone further than they needed to have done. Where is the Lumbwa with the missing toes, I wonder? He would soon put them right. It is a late hour for a raid, but I think they mean to risk it. Come! we must forestall them."

Nyambati talked excitedly—joyfully, it seemed. The thought fastened itself on Sindiga's mind that the morrow would be one of the most momentous days of his life; a day when, in the course of learning something of the strategies of war, it would be necessary for him to match his youthful endowments against the shrewdness and strength of grown men. He realized that he was leaving his youth behind, and that a man's work lay before him.

Swiftly they descended to the kraals, and spread abroad the news of the Lumbwa invasion. The fighting men, in company with Maruani himself and other of the elders, had all left for Nyaribari; there remained behind in Kanyimbo only women and infirm old men. They all, with the exception of Ondieki's father, hurriedly left their huts and commenced to carry out Nyambati's instructions. His plan was to get the villagers

and their livestock as far away from Kanyimbo as possible by the time the Lumbwas descended on the kraals.

First they led out the calves and conducted them to their mothers in order that there should be no lowing. The cattle were then let out of all the kraals and driven along underneath the cliff under cover of the darkness. Before the goats were brought out of the huts they had to have their muzzles bound with rope. When these had been led out nothing remained behind of value that the invaders could make off with.

Nyambati avoided the pass by which he expected the Lumbwas to descend upon the kraals, and made a circuit of the cliff. By driving the cattle first in a southerly and then in an easterly direction, they got behind the invaders. The herd was accustomed to grazing on the higher reaches of the escarpment, and so gave little trouble on this occasion. Many of the women carried children on their backs, but the old men carried nothing beyond their shields, spears, and bows.

It was nearly daybreak when Nyambati halted. He had detoured several extensive swamps, all thickly forested along their margins, and now these swamps lay between the refugees with their cattle and the Lumbwa invaders on the edge of the escarpment. Morasses of this kind are common in Gusii; though not exceptionally dangerous, they are not easily crossed on account of their rank vegetation. They are inhabited by a variety of wild animals and birds. The springs which are responsible for their existence feed the tributaries of the Kuja River and, by way of the Victoria Nyanza, the great White Nile itself.

Nyambati beckoned to Sindiga—not as a Westerner beckons with uplifted forefinger, but in the more imperative Gusii fashion, with all the fingers pointing downwards and back. When a native elder can save a word by using a gesture he always does it.

Sindiga was at the old man's side in a moment. "You

make for Nyamosaka now," instructed Nyambati. "Take care of yourself, boy, and bring back the sons of the cliff with all speed. Direct them to come here, for the Lumbwas will surely follow us."

"And yourself, Nyambati?" asked the youth. It is a form of courtesy in Gusii for young people to address their parents and all elderly persons by name.

"I shall press on with the herd and these people in the direction of the Masai border," replied the old man, giving the name of a certain hill beyond which he would not go unless driven.

"It is well," said Sindiga, and sped away like an arrow in the direction of Nyaribari.

* * * * *

—Dawn is glimmering in the east. Before the breeze which ruffles the surface of the Great Lake, the long grass on the Gusii highlands trembles and is bowed down. A few more brown *omotembe* leaves zigzag down to earth on Bigendi Hill, and the air grows appreciably colder. The hungry hyena grunts its discontent, and shuffles away into the bush from a kraal it has been watching. A jackal shrieks, and a cock which has been persistently crowing ever since midnight calls a final challenge to the night. A cow, which has been enjoying a moonlight repast in somebody's *wimbi* patch, lows softly. The line of the escarpment grows darker, silhouetted against the eastern sky. The radiance of the morning star merges into and is lost in the light of a new day. The shadow of the great cliff recedes, and soon cornfield, bush, and pasture are bathed in warm sunshine.

Surely no more peaceful sight has met the sun's honest gaze on its circuit than the green hill of Nyamosaka. A small herd of cattle are grazing on its crest, and reclining in the grass are the youths who herd them,—bigger youths than usual, and, to be sure, rather many,

but apparently oblivious of everything but their cattle. A deer springs from its covert near by, but there is no race after it, and it disappears again unmolested into the bush. Startled by its spring two golden-crested Kavirondo cranes soar into the air, piercing the stillness of the morning with their shrill cries. They wheel round in swift flight, and finally descend on the cedar-like crown of a great thorn tree. Intoxicated with the joy of life, they stand there and probe each other affectionately with their long beaks.

An hour passes. From the huts across the valley on Nyanchwa Hill dark figures emerge: women and girls, with round water-pots balanced on erect heads and infants strapped across their backs; men with short bent hoes in their hands, who make straightway for their gardens; and small boys who commence to lead out the cattle for milking.

A warning cry arrests one and all. "The Kitutus are here! All that are men bring out your spears and shields!"

Whoever the warrior was who gave the alarm, his summons is speedily obeyed. The men dart back into their huts and reappear in warlike attire. Old men hastily string their bows and young men dance and fling spears.

—But where are the enemy, the Kitutus, who have thus electrified the whole hillside?—They are in plain sight now, brandishing spears on the crest of Nyamosaka. The cattle, which a moment ago were peacefully grazing, are being martialed like an army of soldiers. Those same "herd-boys" who at dawn lay idly watching them graze, are now driving them with loud cries in the direction of Nyanchwa. Now they appear as dancing warriors, fiercely scowling from behind painted leather shields. They themselves are the Kitutus, and their fine herd of cattle is merely a bait thrown to their enemies to lure them to battle. It is as though they said, "See! we

bring our best cattle to graze in your choicest border pastures. Drive us off if you can and take our cattle, or surrender to us your cattle and admit the pasture is ours." Reinforcements are not far away; but these youths are here to tease the enemy, to bait him, taunt him, and exasperate him till anger is engendered and the spark of war is kindled. They have no thoughts of hereafter blaming the other party for the war! Theirs must be the honor of having thrown the challenge, whether they win or lose.

In a suitable position they come to a stand in front of their cattle. The elder *moran* hold themselves in readiness to sally forth to the succor of their younger brethren, who are to be given first opportunity of showing their courage. Their enemies advance upon them more from respect for an established custom than from hatred of the Kitutus. They also bring out their cattle. Thus they show they are in no fear of being vanquished.

A young warrior advances from the line of the Kitutus. It is Ongati, and a superb specimen of manhood he appears, as he stands with head well back and spear in hand waiting the approach of a spearman from the opposing line. Unlike the majority of his comrades he is unbesmeared with clay, and his handsome face is not made hideous with paint.—The custom of smearing oneself with clay has been optional among the Abagusii from earliest times.—His bronze shoulders shine in the sun, and the smile which now hovers about his thin lips has daunted many a foeman.

A champion steps out from among the Nyaribaris. He is of splendid physique, both taller and heavier than the Kitutu. Like many of the Kitutus, he is smeared from head to foot with grease and red clay, and this makes him appear less like a human being than a fiend. Both are naked to their loins except for their feathered

headgear, and their only weapon beyond a glistening spear is a cudgel.

Scornfully the Nyaribari delivers a battery of cudgel blows upon the shield and person of his opponent, who returns the onslaught with spirit. For a few seconds both use their cudgels, but speedily they take to their spears, each having sufficiently assured himself of the prowess of his antagonist.

Now their blood is up, and encouraged by the shouts of their friends they thrust and parry, and leap aside, each ever seeking to circumvent the bobbing shield of his opponent, or so to strike it as to pierce it through. Ongati is agile and wary, and it is as much as the big Nyaribari can do to protect himself from his lightning blows. The Kitutu's plan is obvious: by quick dodging from side to side to plant his blows where least expected and so unnerve and weary his formidable opponent. Three times the excited Nyaribari watchers stifle cries of consternation as the point of Ongati's spear draws blood. Ignoring his wounds the Nyaribari champion dances back and forth with ferocious shouts, towering over the Kitutu like a giant and menacing him with his superior height and weight.

They are fighting in an open space between gnarled old *omotembe* trees. Back and back the Nyaribari is pressed. More than once he has appeared in eminent danger of back-stepping into a huge ant-bear hole large enough to swallow a man. If he avoids this trap and is driven much farther he will soon be dancing over a deserted mole-run. There, where cattle have trod, the turf has given way in spots, leaving innumerable small holes. To step backwards into one of these would cause a serious stumble.—But a smaller creature than the mole is destined to play a fatal part in the finish of this duel.

Between the warriors soldier-ants have excavated for themselves a small cavern. No mound, such as the white ants build, is there to indicate the existence of this

underground barracks, and probably the industrious ant battalions are out on a foraging expedition. A thin line of worker-ants, threading a tortuous way through the long grass, resent the presence of human soldiers near their headquarters, and forthwith attack the legs and feet of the intruders as they prance back and forth; but their pin-pricks are unheeded.

Exultant with his continued success, Ongati lunges forward to finish the conflict. The thin layer of turf over the ant barracks suddenly gives way, and the Kitutu stumbles forward on his shield, divested of its protection. His spear eludes his grasp, and sticks quivering in the sod. A yell of delight from one band of warriors and a groan of consternation from the other tell of the Kitutu's defeat. He falls in a heap, stricken through with a well-timed blow, and the victor snatches his spear and shield.

Ongati's death is a signal for the lines to close. They rush together with a shout. The first blood has been spilled: a man has been slain; and—among civilized and uncivilized races—this, if not an excuse, is most certainly a stimulus for war.

Experienced fighters presently join the youth, and the cries become deafening. Barongo is there in the thick of it; so is Mosoti, Sindiga's half-brother. Maobé, Agwenyi, Machuki—famous warriors all—are there pressing back the enemy. Ondieki is with them. Insane with liquor and bhang, he is fighting furiously and earning some applause. Of the Kanyimbo warriors only one of the many who had feasted together is absent: Sindiga, the son of Nyambati, is nowhere to be seen.

Now Nyanguka's figure towers above the rest. Ongati, his comrade in many a fierce encounter, has to be avenged. Before the encounter Nyanguka had urged Barongo: "Remember one thing, boy; don't stop to think—just fight!"

Now he gives a practical demonstration of his mean-

ing. Wherever he charges, the Nyaribari line is broken. In his grasp is a heavy spear, the like of which few of his tribe have ever wielded; the whole of its length is of burnished steel like Nyambati's. Such spears are used by their enemies, the Lumbwas and the Masais. Only the tips of Gusii spears are of iron, the whole length of their handles being of wood. Twelve foot-long spears, used exclusively by the Gusii tribe, work deadly havoc on both sides.—"Don't think, fight!" is the cry.

Barongo, unskilled in such grim work, is fighting in Nyanguka's wake. The Nyaribaris are endeavoring to close in upon the two of them, and he has no time to wonder where Sindiga is or to lament his absence. He was a witness of Ongati's death, and essays to do his part in avenging it. Pressing hard after Nyanguka, he opposes the enemy as they attempt to attack the big Kitutu from the rear.

Three spears at once find lodgment in Nyanguka's great shield. One foeman who attempts to withdraw his spear has it wrenched from his grasp, and is pierced through and pinned to the ground with his own weapon. Before pausing to withdraw it from the man's body, the formidable Kitutu removes the other spears from his shield and flings them after the retreating foe. Swift as the hawk falling upon its prey, they find lodgment in human flesh. Having observed their flight and repelled three fresh assailants, Nyanguka plants a foot on the dying Nyaribari, and with a quick pull, releases the imprisoned spear. A man who menaces Barongo at that moment flies wounded away from it. Nyanguka hurls it after him, and rushes forward again into the thickest of the fight. In vain the Nyaribaris rally: at his charge they divide asunder, and yelling Kitutus at the giant's back prevent their closing in again upon him. Some, standing a little removed from the fray, hurl light spears into the enemy's line, and these are picked up and hurled back and forth with terrible effect.

Lowering their heads, the sagacious cattle urge forward the timid gently but firmly between their long horns. Behind both parties crouch the old men, who, as occasion offers, fell the enemy with their poisoned arrows. These evil-looking darts are more to be dreaded than the flying spears, for death awaits whoever is grazed by one—an agonizing death that even the prompt application of an antidote can but rarely avert.

Secreted about the tips of these arrows is poison that has been obtained from the glands of the deadliest snakes by hanging their severed heads over vessels prepared for the venom. Often the snake venom is mixed with the juices of poisonous plants. The arrows are made from the straight sticks of an aromatic bush which grows commonly in deserted gardens. About an inch from the tip, the stick is whittled round to give the arrow head the narrowest possible neck. The tip is then dipped in the poison. When an attempt is made to draw one of these darts from a wound, the tip usually breaks off in the flesh.

The din of battle continues. Women run up and down behind the cattle urging the warriors on. Hysterically they weep whenever it appears that their husbands are being driven back. Hysterically they scream their joy whenever their men rally and press back the enemy.

From beneath the legs of the calm cattle peer little children with wonder written in their dark, brown eyes. —So this, then, is War. The big boys interpret to the small boys the tide of battle and the glory of the fight—albeit they tremble themselves, while trying to look brave. Every little while they raise their young voices to shout encouragement to their fathers and brothers.

Nyaribari reinforcements begin to arrive, and the Kitutus are sorely pressed.

"What!" cry their womenfolk. "What! will you let them take our cattle? Will you return and see your children weeping because they have no milk?"

At this the men rally again. That poignant cry nerves them to fresh assault; and always, Nyanguka's proudly held head and active spear are at the front, inspiring the Kitutu clan with valor, and adding fuel to the Nyaribaris' hate.

—From the summit of a high hill Sindiga sees the contending clans on Nyamosaka, and across his mental vision there flashes a picture of Zakawa, standing on that identical hill amid a laughing crowd.—"The Abagusii are not what they were," he had said; "they are not at one; they fight and squabble among themselves."

Was there ever a time, Sindiga wonders, when the tribes of the earth used not to fight each other? and would there ever come a time when peace would reign over the earth, and wars be no more?

As he runs, his eyes sweep the grim battlefield. He is as yet too far away to recognize the fighters, but the figure of one warrior towers above the rest; he guesses it to be Nyanguka's. This worthy had recently made overtures to Nyambati for Nyakiage, Sindiga's half-sister, whom he desired to marry. He was distantly related to Barongo and to old Zakawa, who were both Kitutus by birth but not by blood; their clan had diminished numerically through successive generations until it had finally become absorbed into the Kitutu clan. Had Nyanguka been of the same descent as Sindiga, however remote the relationship may have been, it would have barred his marrying into Nyambati's family. There being no close blood relationship however, Nyanguka's friends thought that his chances were rather good—provided, of course, he had sufficient cattle to pay for his bride. No Gusii girl wants to be married for only a few cows when cattle are plentiful, since this is a reflection on her worth and a disgrace she never lives down.

Diving into a valley, Sindiga loses sight of Nyamosaka Hill for a time. As he races along the narrow path-

way which zigzags to and fro across the stream, avoiding the bushiest slopes, he thinks many times of Barongo. Is he still alive or among the slain?—Little does he suppose that he is being stalked by death himself, even as he ruminates on the dangers his friend may be facing. He is startled into a realization of the fact by the flight of a spear across his vision; it misses him by less than a hand's breadth, and sticks quivering in the turf a few yards to one side of him. A short, lithe figure springs after it from behind a bush—it is the Lumbwa spy! Quick as a leopard Sindiga is upon him, pinning him to earth.—What shall he do next? The Lumbwa's knife is within easy reach, but can he take it and kill the man with it just as one would a chicken? He hesitates. The idea of shedding blood has become revolting to him—though a savage, his soul rebels against the idea of taking human life.

The little Lumbwa does not struggle, but lies with shut eyes waiting for the end. The Omogusii has been too quick for him and will, of course, kill him.—Is it Sindiga's nerve that fails him then, or does some divine impulse assert itself—an Impulse such as savage men are trained to ignore? Of a sudden he looses his grip, and springs aside. In a moment the Lumbwa is gone. Sindiga gazes after him, and then down at the ground where the spy a moment before had lain helpless. The man's footprints seem to stare up accusingly at him—they are the counterpart of those Nyambati had examined beneath the cliff! Sindiga realizes that he has spared a most dangerous foe—the one man who is able to lead the enemy in pursuit of his father; who, as Nyambati had declared, knew the escarpment "as well as any native." For a brief moment Sindiga stands as one dazed, lamenting his weakness; then remembering the commission he has received, he seizes the Lumbwa's spear, and runs with it across another valley and up the slope of Nyamosaka.

There has come a lull in the conflict. The Kitutu warriors have fallen back preparatory to a final sally. A rush upon the foremost Nyaribari cattle is recommended, with a fighting retreat to Kitutu before fresh reinforcements arrive to assist the defenders of Nyanchwa Hill. The young men meanwhile are receiving the commendations of the elders and the praises of their older brothers and cousins.

"Where's Sindiga?" someone asks.

Not a soul appears to know. Ondieki shuffles up, and is about to make answer that the bhang probably made Sindiga sick, when Barongo exclaims: "See! There he is, coming through the corn at top speed; he will be here in a moment to answer for himself."

The warriors look in the direction indicated: it is Sindiga without a doubt. He ascends the hill without slackening his pace, and soon stands before them, panting for breath. He is unarmed save for a light spear.

"Abamurra!" (Brothers!) he cries. "Give ear! The Lumbwas are upon us, and you must leave here at once. Your cattle are safe; the women you left behind in Kanyimbo are safe; but your houses are in flames."

The warriors spring to their feet, and all eyes scan the horizon. Grim testimony to the truth of Sindiga's words is not wanting. From the thatched roofs of their homes under the cliff, angry flames belch forth, and very soon the cliff face is entirely obscured with smoke.

"You must repay the Nyaribaris at a more convenient season," continues Sindiga. "Foes we can always find on the Nyaribari border, but never a foe more worthy of chastisement than these. Last night they listened to your plans: today theirs have been frustrated. They are mad, hunting for spoil that is hidden, and burning your homes in their fury."

While speaking Sindiga has grasped the shield of a fallen Nyaribari, hefted it, and thrown it down again

in favor of a heavier one lying on the ground near by. He has grown battle eager.

Ondieki is the last of the warriors to rise. He feels mortified by Sindiga's unexpected appearance and the notice that is being taken of him; also the effects of the bhang are wearing off, and he is beginning to feel less brave. He would welcome an immediate retreat and no more fighting for a long time to come, but hesitates to speak his mind. His old father who, that morning, had presaged the success of the Kitutu arms, is at home in Kanyimbo, forgotten by Ondieki.

"Why worry if the cattle are safe?" says he, endeavoring to disguise his cowardice. "Let us be content with the spoil we have gained and not take on more than we can manage in one day." But no one pays any attention to him.

The Kitutus adjust their shields to their backs in preparation for the retreat from Nyamosaka. This precaution is in reality an unnecessary one, for there is no danger of the Nyaribaris attempting to interfere with their going. They too have seen the smoke clouds over Manga, and understand what has happened. A Lumbwa raid is a menace to every Gusii clan, and therefore the Kitutus must be allowed time to repel the invaders. If they succeed, they will return the weaker to withstand the Nyaribaris; if they are defeated, the victorious Lumbwas will still have the Nyaribaris to contend with. They have good reason for hoping that the Kitutus will win, for the safety of Gusii depends upon their united ability to stem the tide of Nilotic invasion. Should the danger of a bad Kitutu defeat become imminent, the Nyaribaris may even rally to their assistance.

Not a spear is thrown after the retreating Kitutus. Their enemies stand and watch them, speculating doubtless as to the strength of the Lumbwa invaders and the possibility of their becoming involved themselves. The invaders have captured a few cows from the Nyari-

baris, but have lost as many men. Small boys run in and out of the Kitutu cattle and succeed in driving them back over the crest of Nyamosaka.—Had they been Lumbwa cattle, a shrill whistle would have sent them stampeding back whence they came of their own accord —so well do the Lumbwas train their cattle to appreciate the exigencies of war!

The cattle are followed by their owners at a run, the adults keeping in the rear in case of attack. A few of the Kitutu women remain behind to care for the wounded, and bury the dead. They know there is no danger of their being molested. Among the savages of Kavirondo, women are not regarded as liable for the sins of the tribe to which they may belong, but are allowed to travel freely in enemy country without danger of molestation, even in times of war.

The Nyaribaris drag off the bodies of their slain for burial in the vicinity of their bereaved homes. On their side also the women are the chief mourners, even as they were the chief spur during the conflict.

* * * * *

As the Kitutu warriors ascended Nyamosaka Hill, Sindiga told Barongo how it was that he had been absent from the morning's fighting, beginning with his exit from the hut the night before.

Relating his experience with the Lumbwa spy, he declared with feeling: "I acted the coward, I know; but it was no use reminding myself that, even as I held him there, his tribe was preparing to burn my home—that I had a debt of vengeance to pay, and the power in part pay it. Flesh and blood cried out to me that even that villain's life was too wonderful a thing to destroy."

Barongo pondered his friend's words.

"It was a little different for me," he said; "men were stabbing and getting stabbed on every side. I hit and wounded several, but I do not think I killed anyone. I

saw Ongati go down, and then I ran with the rest and shouted. It was all over before I knew it; and in the middle of it I did not think, as I have done at times, what a pity it is that men cannot live at peace with each other. Really I hate the thought of shedding blood; but Nyanguka says one doesn't feel the same after one has killed a few men."

That instant a hand was laid very gently on Sindiga's shoulder. It was Nyanguka's.

"Son," he said, "hear me. If a race existed strong enough to forbid war, there might be room for tender feelings. But the great races love war and spoil. By war races become great. Therefore—be brave and learn to show no mercy!"

VI

"THE FORTUNES OF WAR"

JUST BEYOND NYAMOSAKA HILL THE KITUTUS divided into two bands. The larger of these, led by an old fighter by the name of Maobé, followed the course of a stream up into higher Gusii, anticipating that the enemy would of a surety follow old Nyambati and the cattle. The smaller, led by Nyanguka, was sent to follow the Lumbwas up the pass, and if possible attack them in the rear as they left the scene of their devastations. Sindiga, desirous of rejoining his father, accompanied the larger band, and Nyanguka released Barongo in order that he might accompany Sindiga.

Nyanguka's party halted on the palm-crowned summit of a low hill, whence an expansive view was obtained of the country below the escarpment. Smoking ruins, where erstwhile their homes had been, everywhere blackened the landscape. Without going out of their way to burn every kraal in Kanyimbo, the Lumbwa invaders had set fire to all those that lay in the pathway of their pursuit. Just below the Kitutus lay the soothsayer's kraal, and several young men insisted on going down to see how he had fared, and if possible get their fortunes told. Ondieki went with them.

The Gusii soothsayers, or diviners, are not to be confused with the sinister, soul-torturing witch-doctors of the African continent. Their special province is divination, but they also compound medicines from herbs, roots, and snake venom. Sick people come to them for healing, and are often helped towards recovery by their

unreasoning faith in the diviner's supernatural powers, and by charms and various rites which serve to keep their minds occupied.

Divining includes the predicting of the best time for attacking an enemy, the discovering of thieves, and the giving of advice for obtaining "good luck" in any venture. In peace time the soothsayers will often offer advice with regard to matrimony, but they are rarely patronized by lovers lest they should appear to be in doubt as to the perfection of their prospective brides or suitors. There are no women soothsayers in Gusii, but there are women who are supposed to possess "medicine." The payment for divination usually consists of baskets of *wimbi* or beer. No Omogusii ever consults a diviner in private, but is always accompanied by his friends.

Meanwhile Nyanguka and his men found Ondieki's father, the diviner, sitting at the door of his hut, where he had sat all morning without having seen a Lumbwa. Removed somewhat from the other kraals of Kanyimbo, his humble abode had escaped the notice of the marauders. The diviner was a pleasant-featured old man, with nothing about his appearance to inspire awe. His kindly face shone greasily from beneath a halo of white hair. He greeted the warriors effusively, expressing his regret that he had nothing in the house to offer them in the way of refreshment: at which they assured him their business was too serious and too urgent to allow of their thinking of food.

The old man readily gave his consent to divining how the Kitutus would fare, but showed some reluctance about declaring Ondieki's particular fortune.

The manner of the fortune-telling was simple. The old man sat down on the ground and spread out before them on his lap a smooth piece of cowhide, tilting the ends slightly with his knees. While adjusting it he listened in an interested manner to the excited conversa-

tion of the young men. Then he untied a small satchel of leather, and taking the contents in the palms of both hands, examined them closely.

"Why! It appears I shall be drinking good beer this time tomorrow," he exclaimed gleefully. His visitors promptly decided that if they returned alive it should fall out as he had predicted.

Carefully then the old man threw the contents of his two hands into the hide. Pebbles and seashells, some with their backs filed off revealing the intricacies of their structure within, raced down the hide towards its center in company with twisted oddments of iron and brass. Each oddment had its significance, the colored pebbles representing cattle, the shells warriors. The shells congregated together near the center of the hide.

"Kai tah-tah!" he exclaimed. "What a host have come against you! You will have to proceed cautiously."—The onlookers were astounded, and bent closer, to see, if possible, what the diviner saw.

Taking the magic baubles in his hands, he again threw them across the hide, observing intently their race back to the center, and apparently oblivious of all else. Looking up, his face radiant with patriotic fervor, he declared: "It will be a terrible struggle—but you will win. The Abagusii are brave men." The *moran* shouted loudly their satisfaction at this prediction, and the diviner proceeded to a closer examination of his tricks, touching a stone here and a shell there, and producing avalanches among them.

Addressing a formal prayer to the spirits of the dead, he caused another avalanche. "But how those Abagusii fight!" he exclaimed dramatically.—The young men became wildly excited, and he continued: "See! They are thrashing the invader! They are giving him his dues! The Lumbwas make a lot of noise, but they cannot withstand the Abagusii!"

Suddenly he lowered his voice, and uttered a cry of

dismay: "A great man will fall near the river!" The onlookers gave vent to their consternation, and he hastened to reassure them: "Be of good cheer! The Lumbwas are defeated; let it suffice.—Take my magic cow with you, and the battle is yours! Only, if the cow gets hurt or lost, remember, it is likely to bring great trouble upon you all!"

The warriors thanked him fervently, for the soothsayer's cow had won them many a fierce fight. Once the cow had been captured by the Luos, and that day the Kitutus had suffered a severe defeat; but as soon as they had recovered the cow their fortunes had changed again.

Ondieki now insisted on having his own fortune told, but his importunity grieved the old man. He gathered his tricks together again, and flung them impatiently across the hide. A thin spear of steel fell within a small ring of plaited grass; whereupon the old man declared: "Look you! You had much better stay at home. If you go you will be bound and carried off by the enemy."

In vain Ondieki begged his father to change the verdict. When he found him obdurate, he lost his last ounce of courage. His father had never yet misread an omen. If such a fate awaited him, where was the sense in his going? He was so thoroughly scared that the warriors were forced to leave him behind.

Promising the old man a heifer for his services, they sallied up the hill in high spirits, driving ahead of them the magic cow. It was a pure white cow of excellent parts, with horns unusually long. Round this cow the Kitutus would rally when the battle went against them. It was their "Union Jack," their "Ark of the Covenant," —an unfailing inspiration to every loyal Kitutu. As they traversed the scene of the Lumbwas' devastations, volunteers in plenty joined them. From far and near they came, fired by heroic patriotism, till by the time Nyan-

guka's band entered the pass they numbered three times as many as had engaged the Nyaribaris.

Scarcely had the warriors left the diviner's kraal when a small party of Lumbwas appeared. Ignoring the old man and his entreaties they speedily martialed Ondieki outside the hut. They tied his hands behind him, and made him understand that he was to be their guide. They wanted him to show them a quick way up the cliff, by taking which they could rejoin the rest of the Lumbwas before Nyanguka's band attacked. Ondieki was bluntly told to direct them or die—and Ondieki had no wish to die; so he led them up a way Sindiga and he had often taken as young boys. He was helped up with spear pricks and with thrusts from the Lumbwas' shields. At the summit a suggestion was mooted that, having no further use for the prisoner, they might as well send him back where he came from by a gentle push over the precipice edge; but one of them, having an eye to profit, interposed, declaring he would retain the captive to grind his corn. The suggestion was agreed to and they pushed on at a sharp pace, every now and then prodding their prisoner with spear or cudgel to make him move faster.

Maobé's band had, by this time, climbed up into the hills behind the escarpment. They had started off at a run, accompanied by shouts and grunts meant to resemble anything from the roar of a lion to the groan of a dying Lumbwa. Maobé was a man of fine physique and great courage. He was heavily built, and walked with a decided lurch from side to side—a lurch which became remarkable when he ran. This he did when he felt like it, irrespective of whether the rest of the party ran or not. When, upon reaching the top of the escarpment, it became necessary to proceed with great caution, the warriors experienced real difficulty in restraining their enthusiastic leader. Not one among them, however, but had great confidence in his fighting abilities.

They were nearing the hill where Nyambati had promised to wait with the cattle when Nyanguka's party left the diviner's kraal. As the warriors went along, the more timorous among them speared the bushes they passed with considerable show of bravado. Doubtless this helped them to feel braver than they were by nature.— A great shout went up when finally they came into sight of their cattle covering an expansive hillside like a carpet. Driving the cattle with Nyambati were a few old men and a great company of women and girls. Nyambati and the men were at one side of the herd, and the women and girls at the other. Hard after them followed some two hundred Lumbwas.

The intentions of the enemy had been to slay the menfolk first and then drive off the women in front of the cattle, but the sudden appearance of Maobé's band caused them to change their plans. With the dual purpose of challenging the Abagusii and reaching the high ground first, they turned the course of their pursuit in the direction of the women.

Maobé's party yelled, and broke into a run. They numbered less than a hundred fighting men, and not a few of them were unaccustomed to warfare. All were eager to engage with the enemy, however, and confident that recruits would join Nyanguka's band as soon as news of the raid spread to other districts.

Guided by the spy to whom Sindiga had shown mercy, the Lumbwas had safely detoured the swamps, ignorant, of course, of the fact that they were themselves being pursued; for Nyanguka and his men had not yet come into sight. But Maobé felt assured that they had entered the pass by this time in the rear of the Lumbwas.

It was unusual for Lumbwas to make an attack by daylight. They generally traveled by night, and slept in hiding during the day. About midnight they would break up into numerous bands, release the cattle from the Gusii kraals, and drive them off under cover of

darkness. On this occasion misfortune had met them as soon as they had reached the escarpment. Their guide had gone ahead in order to spy upon the movements of the Kitutus, and they had lost their way through mistaking his directions. When they had finally found their way down the cliff, their chagrin at finding the kraals empty was too great to allow of the complete abandonment of their hopes. Setting fire to a number of huts and corncribs they had hurried up the pass after Nyambati, only to find themselves, after an hour's march, confronted by a large swamp. Here their guide—after narrowly escaping execution at Sindiga's hands—had finally found them. Trusting they could overtake the cattle before the Kitutus returned from fighting with the Abagusii of Nyaribari, they had pushed on, first sending a few of their number back to watch how the Kitutus fared, and to observe if reinforcements joined them. It was this detachment that had happened upon the diviner's kraal, and made Ondieki captive.

Maobé and his men were twice as far away from their cattle as the Lumbwas when the latter began their dash for the summit of the hill. Nyambati ordered the women to drive the cattle with all possible speed back and down into a valley at their rear, thus leaving the expansive hilltop free for a passage of arms between their men and the enemy.

Traveling obliquely up the hill, Maobé's band made faster progress than the Lumbwas. Leaning upon his heavy spear, Nyambati stood and watched the race. When it became evident to him that the Abagusii and their enemies would gain the summit together, he rushed forward with a mighty shout and felled the foremost Lumbwa warrior just as the first Abagusii came up. Among these fleet-footed ones were Barongo, Sindiga, and an older youth named Machuki.

The Abagusii ranged themselves so as to be between their enemies and the valley down into which the herd

of cattle had been driven. As soon as he could disengage himself from his assailants, Nyambati joined them, and held brief counsel with Maobé. The Lumbwas separated to right and left, gaining the summit at different points and converging on the Abagusii who backed away and spread themselves out so as to prove less of a target for flying spears.

—Now the warriors fall into long opposing lines; Lumbwas and Abagusii face each other, and await the stepping forth of a champion. Both sides are confident of victory. Sindiga, bearing a heavy shield, a club, and a brightly polished spear, surveys the Lumbwa lines grimly. This is the moment he has waited for. In the hut, discussing plans for the Nyaribari raid with the *moran*, Sindiga had secretly wished his first fight might have been with the race whose name was eternally sullied with the abduction, and possible murder, of his mother; or, if he was a Lumbwa himself—and as yet he possessed no proofs to the contrary—with the race that had cast him out and sold him to Nyambati. Instinctively and doggedly he rebelled against the idea of Nyambati's ever having robbed even a Lumbwa home of a child that was loved. At midnight, driving the cattle with his father, he had thought that if the cattle had been Lumbwas he could have rushed in among them and died avenging Keruo. Commissioned by his father to recall the Kitutus from their Nyaribari engagement, he had slain a hundred imaginary Lumbwas on the way —and then at the journey's end (how he writhed at the remembrance of it!) had qualmed at the thought of shedding the blood of even a Lumbwa spy. All the way back into the hills he had lamented his weakness; for had he not been taught since childhood that the individual who shrank from shedding blood was only half a man?

He experiences no qualms now as he surveys the menacing Lumbwa host. Oh, how he hates them! He

senses Nyambati's nearness in the rear, and knows how ready *he* is for the fight.—"Good!" the old man had said when Sindiga had appeared on the hill at Barongo's heels. "Good," Sindiga had replied; and, beyond this brief greeting, no words had passed between them.

An expectant hush like the calm before a storm hovers over the rival warrior bands. It is followed by a clamor of encouraging shouts from the Kitutu lines as Sindiga stands forth boldly—the youngest Omogusii ever to defy a Lumbwa host. In a loud, confident voice he calls for a champion to come forward and do battle with him.

"Good! You're a son of Manga!" cries Maobé delightedly. "*Fight* now, and don't think!"

A brawny Lumbwa, hideously painted, dances forward and comes to a halt within a yard or two of Sindiga. For a few seconds he observes the Omogusii with baleful eyes. Besides the usual cudgel and spear, he carries one weapon which Sindiga lacks—namely, a sheathed knife, worn at his right side with the hilt to the fore. He also carries a snuff-horn, an article the Abagusii have no use for, since with them tobacco is in disfavor. It is this article he now grasps. Dancing backwards a few paces, he hurls it at his opponent with all his strength: thus he seeks to show his contempt for the Omogusii whose haughty challenge he has accepted. —Most Lumbwas distend the lobes of their ears with heavy ornaments weighing sometimes as much as two pounds. If this warrior had been similarly burdened at the time, he would have dislodged his ear-weight and thrown *it* at his adversary instead of the snuff-horn.

Sindiga easily intercepts the missile with his shield, but burns inwardly at the insult. With a loud cry he rushes at the Lumbwa. Almost simultaneously with the cry his spear crashes down upon the Lumbwa's shield, piercing it through, and driving the Lumbwa champion backward. Blood spurts from a wound in the latter's

side. Sindiga quickly follows up his advantage, delivering a rain of lightning blows with his cudgel. It is he who dances now—wildly, jubilantly. The Lumbwa backs away. The swiftness of the assault has well-nigh taken his breath away, and fear of this agile young Omogusii has gripped him.

The shouts of his comrades steel his nerve. Less malignancy than cunning darkens his visage now. Both combatants have discarded their cudgels. Fiercely they engage with spears held aloft in sinewy arms; but soon it is apparent that the excitement following a sleepless night is telling upon Sindiga's strength. He assumes the defensive, and his antagonist marks his labored breathing.

Of a sudden the Lumbwa darts under Sindiga's spear, covering himself with his upraised shield. Gripping his own spear in his left hand, quick as lightning he unsheathes the knife at his side. With one swift slash he rips his opponent's shield from top to bottom, and Sindiga, champion of Kanyimbo and Gusii, stands defenseless.

No knife in Omogusii hands could thus have torn its way through four feet of stout buffalo hide! The feat draws thunderous applause from the Lumbwa lines. Another than Sindiga, in his present state of mind, might have turned and sought temporary safety behind the line of Gusii spears. But Sindiga feels he has a duty to perform or die. Keruo's blood seems to cry out to him demanding vengeance, and death seems preferable to flight. He is defenseless, but not defeated.

Dropping his now useless shield, he leaps at the Lumbwa, fastens his free hand on his shield, and strikes the arm that holds the knife. The weapon falls from the surprised Lumbwa's grasp, nor may his bleeding, broken arm again lift knife or spear against foeman. Muscular fingers close on his throat, and he is forced backward.—But even on the verge of triumph, the hor-

ror of killing comes back to Sindiga, and a mist gathers before his eyes; the lines of frenzied foeman fade in a blood-red glare, and he feels himself falling. With a mighty effort he strikes yet once again, shouting Keruo's name and driving his spear relentlessly into the darkness fast closing in upon him.

—When Sindiga recovered consciousness, old Nyambati was kneeling by his side. Faintly he heard shouts and pounding feet, and the sound of clashing arms.

"Well done, boy!" spoke his father's voice, "Well done!"

"Is that you, Nyambati?" he asked, still with a mist before his eyes.

"Ay, lad, Nyambati it is," the voice answered. "And ay, you have done well, Sindiga. Do you know what you have done? You have slain the man who dragged your mother off into slavery when I—your father—was sorely wounded and unable to protect her.—The very man, lad! I was bound to do it myself, but was held back. 'Give Sindiga a chance,' they said to me. I broke away when I saw you rush at him without a shield, but there was no need of it.—Kai! But you did well, my son!"

As the truth dawned upon Sindiga he felt his heart beat faster.

"I hear shouting," he said then. "The fight is on. Help me up, father."—The fact that Nyambati himself had borne him away from the battlefield when the lines closed, drew from Sindiga that term of endearment—"father," so rarely used in Gusii as a mode of address.

Nyambati took his hand, and he stood up firmly upon his feet.

"Do you feel any strength, my son?"

"Plenty," Sindiga returned. "Let us go from here. Let us return to the fight."

He had sustained a slight wound where the tip of the Lumbwa's spear had grazed his side, but apart from this he was unhurt. In vain Nyambati remonstrated at

his determination to resume the conflict. Sindiga strode off in the direction of the shouts, and Nyambati followed resignedly.

—"Over yonder lies your spear," says he; "and see, there is a new shield beside it; take them. Only guard yourself well."

In the old man's own right hand is a long Gusii spear, and on his left arm a ponderous shield. Old as he is, he prefers a spear to the bow commonly used by men of his age.

"Our men rushed forward in a body behind me, when they saw you both fall," he explains. "They cut right into the enemy, driving them off in every direction. But we are surrounded. The Abagusii are fighting like men, but Nyanguka's band has not come up yet and we are badly outnumbered."

The Abagusii are certainly in sore straits. Their enemies outnumber them and are fighting with a courage born of desperation. By annihilating Maobé's band before reinforcements can arrive, they hope to get away, not only with their lives, but with all the Gusii cattle; but if they fail to achieve this they are lost, and none realize it better than they themselves. Old Nyambati and Sindiga arrive just in time to drive off a couple of Lumbwas from Barongo, whom they find lying prone upon his back feebly attempting to intercept with his shield a spear aimed at his heart.

But now a rumor goes round that Nyanguka and his men are at hand. Some declare they have heard that warrior's war-whoop. It may be that they have been deceived, but the mere possibility of help being at hand fires the Abagusii with new courage. Rallying to Maobé's side they unite with him in crying Nyanguka's name, so that many imagine that warrior to be actually in sight.

Consternation seizes them all when, instead of Nyanguka's party, Lumbwas appear in the valley, driving be-

fore them with spear-pricks an unhappy prisoner. He is bound round with rope which secures his hands at his back, and he stumbles along without daring to raise his head. Every now and then he falls to the ground, only to be dragged to his feet again and pricked savagely forward. Can this be the only survivor of Nyanguka's party? If so, then the most terrible defeat in their history awaits the Kitutus of the Great Cliff, fight as they may.

Their fears are put to flight in a dramatic manner. A war-whoop is heard, and recognized by all the Abagusii. It echoes round the hills and is followed by a mighty shout from an unseen host. The Lumbwas in the rear of the hapless prisoner seem petrified with alarm. From behind a fold in the hillside issues a great multitude of armed warriors: it is Nyanguka and his men! They exceed many times the band he led round the base of the cliff, and before them ambles a great white cow, with something of the conscious dignity of a war-horse. Immediately the hillsides resound with shouts of "Nyanguka!" and "The victory cow!"

Already Sindiga is halfway down the hill, intent on the rescue of the captive. Barongo is close behind him with Nyambati. Besides their long spears they carry light spears with which they hope to reduce the number of Lumbwas before actually closing with them. Preoccupied with watching the progress of Nyanguka's forces, the small band of Lumbwas driving the captive fail to see their more immediate danger. Three flying spears strike home, and the first of three charging Abagusii has leapt into their midst. For once Sindiga has raced Barongo, but Barongo is soon fighting at his side. With irresistible force Nyambati flings himself into mêlée. Shield hits shield, and half a dozen Lumbwas are carried off their feet by the force of the onslaught, to fall over the bodies of wounded comrades.

Sindiga is first to reach the captive. He discovers to

his amazement that it is Ondieki. Half his face is swollen with repeated blows, and blood is congealing about his body and limbs where he has been prodded with his captor's spears. With one forceful spear thrust, Sindiga fells his chief tormentor and turns on the rest.

"Good!"—Nyanguka's voice blends with Nyambati's in Sindiga's praise. Like a whirlwind the reinforcements sweep down upon such of Ondieki's captors as have escaped the spears of the heroic three. Sindiga cuts the throngs that bind Ondieki, and on they sweep up the hill to join Maobé's diminishing force. What fierce cries, what horrible execrations, what savage grunts accompany that charge! They are savages now in very truth. All other instincts are sacrificed to the one grim purpose: the defeat and annihilation of a hated foe.

VII

THE PATHWAY TO PEACE

WHEN THE REINFORCEMENTS REACHED THE CROWN of the hill, the tide of battle had turned, and the Lumbwas were in full flight. The victorious bands of Abagusii join in headlong pursuit. Young warriors, swift of foot, outrun the rest. They have fought, and are alive; their spears have tested blood: henceforth they will count themselves men.

Barongo, the swift of foot, is leading. Sindiga strains to overtake him, the sense of weakness and fatigue he had experienced earlier in the day gone, and with it the last lingering aversion to shedding blood. He runs like one possessed, with eyes blazing wrath, knowing nothing but his hatred of the enemy. With a shout he leaps ahead of Barongo whose voice mingles with the gruffer voices of older warriors in an enthusiastic cheer for "Sindiga, son of Manga."

On an eminence the Lumbwas attempt to make a stand. Stayed by warning cries the foremost pursuers drop back, and like a flash their comrades are up with them, in widening lines, advancing to the attack. Detachments leave the main body of Abagusii and dive into the bush, one party to the left and another to the right. Under a rain of flying spears the rest rush the eminence, and for a time there is furious fighting on the hillock. Maobé, who has been fighting at Nyanguka's side, receives a mortal wound, and is borne away to the rear.

The Lumbwas are fighting on a long, grassy ridge,

which terminates in bushy slopes. Suddenly, emerging from the bush at both ends of the ridge appear the Abagusii detachments. By detouring through the bush they have gained the summit without being seen, and, as Nyanguka heads a charge up the slope, they attack simultaneously the flanks of the enemy. The rapidity with which the detour has been made is a complete surprise to the Lumbwas, who make a precipitate and disorderly retreat from the ridge.—An excited white cow with long horns rushes after them.

They are now at a worse disadvantage than ever retreating Abagusii are put to, for they cannot adjust their shields to their backs as easily as the latter, nor run thus protected with the same swiftness. Hampered by the weight of their shields, not a few discard them and trust entirely to flight. These are followed by one of the Gusii detachments down towards the Kuja River: the fugitives are too far away from its source in the Lumbwa foothills for any possibility of escape to lie in that direction.

The bulk of the Lumbwas retain their shields, and on a smaller eminence than the first make a last desperate attempt to hold their own. Confidently the Abagusii storm the hillock. Sindiga and Barongo follow in the wake of Nyanguka's thirsty spear. Machuki and Sindiga's half brother, Mosoti, are defending the wizard's cow, upon which several determined attacks have been made. She appears as conscious as ever of the dignified nature of her appointment.

This cow is as superstitiously regarded by the Lumbwas as by the Abagusii themselves. She is regarded as the chief cause of their present discomfiture. Fifty Lumbwas, more skilled in fighting than the rest, gain some sort of order and charge down upon her. As many Abagusii are by the side of Mosoti and Machuki in a moment: the magic cow must be defended at all costs. Other Abagusii swarm up the hill in the meantime. The

Lumbwas are dislodged and forced to resume their retreat. These also make for the river, fighting desperately as they go. Gusii shields are ripped up by Lumbwa knives, but their owners care not: among the dead there are shields enough and to spare.

Not a few of their enemies' shields are of wicker instead of buffalo hide. To this day the natives of Gusii ridicule the wicker shields of the Lumbwas; many will even declare that the Lumbwas left their leather shields at home out of contempt for their adversaries. It may be surmised, however, that, having had their own leather shields ripped open in warfare with the Masais, the Lumbwas found wicker shields resisted the knife better than leather ones. Certainly they would be lighter to carry.

Over bracken-clad hillside and across wooded valleys the battle rages, till at last the Kuja River gleams below them, winding its silver way through evergreen pastures. Those Lumbwas who led the flight down to the river have already perished at its brink. Beside their mutilated bodies stand six victorious Abagusii—all that are left of the detachment that followed them down to the river.

Dead and dying warriors strew the pathway to the river, and stepping over their bodies the live warriors come—some ninety Lumbwas, chased by five hundred vengeful Abagusii. This is the day they have waited for: a day of punishment—a day of complete revenge. Quarter is neither given nor asked. As long as the hapless invaders can carry arms they will fight, for they expect no mercy today. In times past mercy has been shown. In many a fierce encounter, when fleeing Lumbwas have thrown aside their weapons and looked death in the face, the Abagusii have righteously spared them, asking them merely to desist from their cattle stealing. But the Lumbwas, in imitation of their dread enemies, the Masais, spare neither man, nor woman, nor infant. In

front of dying fathers and brothers, Abagusii children have been foully slain; their wives and sisters have been debauched and dragged away to lives of slavery in Lumbwa. The Abagusii, on the other hand, did not molest Lumbwa women. Whether or not in the early days their scruples may have been due in part to their fears of exasperating a formidable foe, in Sindiga's day they were attributable to a growing sense of the wickedness of injuring defenseless women and children. The Lumbwas never entertained any such scruples. Arrogantly they have persisted in their outrages year after year, defying all and sparing none, and this is the day of retribution.

Downward the tide of battle surges. Spear after spear is plunged into the bodies of the slain. The Abagusii dare run no risks. Horrible tricks their enemies often resort to, in order that they may be taken for dead. To run the slightest risk of leaving a live Lumbwa behind may mean the death of an exhausted or wounded comrade in the rear.

The river is reached, and the pursuers shout triumphantly. Hideous shrieks and yells are flung back from the dry throats of their frenzied, desperate foemen.—The hated Lumbwas are surrounded.

—Who would dwell upon that last gruesome struggle? Conscious that beyond the river, the swamps, and the thornwood, liberty and life beckoned to them; sensing too that the swift approach of night held out a glimmer of hope, the Lumbwas fought on. A few plunged into the river, but a pitiless rain of spears and poisoned arrows followed them. Not a soul reached the opposite shore.—Thus ended at dusk the most determined raid the Lumbwas ever made upon the Abagusii of Kanyimbo in Kitutu.

Lingering among the dead, after the rest of the fighters had left the battleground, stood young Sindiga and three others—Mosoti his half-brother, Nyanguka, and

Barongo the son of Kibagendi. Their faces were unillumined with the knowledge of victory. Sorrow lay heavily upon them all, but most heavily upon Sindiga and Mosoti, the sons of old Nyambati.

A writer on African tribes has remarked that Kaffir menfolk care little for the deaths of their brethren, and it is an idea prevalent among white men who have lived in Africa. Nor is this latter fact at all surprising, in view of the riotous excesses of every description that are the usual sequel to death in Africa. A few necessary formalities are observed, but no memorial is erected to the dead, and a person bereaved of husband or wife will marry again within a few days. This apparent callousness is most marked where disease or war makes its worst ravages, and where death is an everyday affair. Yet no man dieth to himself in Africa. Every death is regarded as a calamity to the community as a whole; if the days of mourning were prolonged for each, death being such an everyday occurrence, the tribes would be spending all their days in sorrow. The so-common excesses are traceable to two distinct objectives—the drowning of sorrow and the evoking of passion; passion being regarded as necessary that punishment may follow the guilty. Evil spirits are kept at bay by warlike exhibitions. If a man dies of sickness, it is presumed that some enemy tribe is responsible, and the mourners are worked up by the drinking bout to avenge his death. But Kaffirs do experience real sorrow. The death of a popular hero or a public benefactor calls forth touching demonstrations of grief that continue for days, and a Kaffir mother's sorrow for a deceased child is distressing to behold.—As real a sorrow had crossed Sindiga's pathway.

"Take us to him," he repeated.—It was the third time he had made the request. A voiceless sympathy had been holding Nyanguka back; but at last, giving vent to an exclamation of utter sadness and withdrawing a

hand from Sindiga's shoulder, he reluctantly led the way.

The sun was sinking. Hawks hovered overhead, and flapped black wings in their faces as they passed. Many valiant men had drawn their last breaths there by the river's brink; and Nyambati himself was numbered among the dead—Nyambati, the counselor of sages—Nyambati, the lion-hearted. He lay where he had fallen in a pool of blood, on the rocks that lined the river's edge.

Nyanguka told how he had seen the old man stoop over a prone Lumbwa to exclaim: "So he, too, is dead! My enemies are no more!" He had found the Lumbwa lying on the sward, covered apparently with dreadful wounds—a ghastly spectacle; but no sooner had the old man turned away, than the Lumbwa had brushed aside the "evidences" of his death, and sprung energetically to his feet. Dealing the old man a terrific blow on the head with his club, he had dived into the river. Nyambati had dropped to earth without a groan; but the Lumbwa's strategy had not saved him, for Nyanguka's spear, unerringly flung, had sent him mortally wounded to the bottom.

A rude litter was made, and the four bore Nyambati's body away up the hill. A chill wind rose, and the sun sank in an ocean of blood-red flame. The hawks swooped down behind the mourners, and the corn leaves rustled plaintively. Homing cranes raced away from the scene with weird cries, and a night bird hooted dolefully after them.

The mourners wept and sang. Their voices rose on the night wind, wild with poignant grief, lamenting and extolling the dead.

Nyambati was buried within his own kraal. On his right side he lies, to the right of the low doorway through which Keruo had looked out on the night Sindiga was born—that night when her eyes had seen, be-

yond the confines of her hut, and beyond the shadow of the cliff outside, the sunshine of days that were not. She had been Nyambati's first wife; for this reason was the old man buried beside her hut, in full accordance with the customs of the land.—He was mourned many days.

Nyambati's sons shaved their heads as a token of respect for the dead, and each bound a leather ring on the middle finger of the right hand. Kinanga shaved her head also, and went to live with Nyambati's brother, whose wife she became automatically by Gusii law. Unlike Nyambati, this worthy had many wives, and more children than he could easily count. Nyakiage considered herself too young to think about marriage and went to live with her mother, declaring Nyanguka might get her if he waited long enough, but refusing to set a date. Gusii custom forbade her shaving her head, since she would some day sever her connection with Nyambati's family by marriage into another clan. None the less, she grieved deeply for her father, feeling the loss not quite so keenly as Sindiga perhaps, because *her* mother lived. If Sindiga's mother lived—and sometimes Sindiga wondered what grounds Nyambati had had for believing her dead—she was lost to the Kitutu clan—probably a forlorn slave growing old in some remote enemy kraal.

Nyambati's old kraal was considered Mosoti's property by right of his being the elder, but the two brothers lived there together for several years. Either Nyakiage or one of her cousins—now become her stepsisters and brothers—visited them frequently with baskets of food prepared by Kinanga. Mosoti and Sindiga had little in common, but they thought a great deal of each other. They had their own circle of friends, with whom they associated intimately in work, recreation and war. Sindiga, ever mindful of the fact that he was unable to prove his parentage, mixed perhaps less

with the Kitutus of Kanyimbo than did his brother and his friend Barongo. That he had never pressed Nyambati for the truth concerning himself and Keruo often provoked him to mournful reflections.

Nyanguka, who still desired to marry Nyakiage, now made his overtures to her two brothers, the sons of old Nyambati. Brothers, however, are more considerate of their sisters than parents where "affaires de cœur" are concerned, and presuming Nyakiage's affections were lodged elsewhere, Mosoti flatly refused to consider his suit. Having inherited from Nyambati sufficient cattle to procure for themselves wives whenever they wished, neither of the young men were in any hurry for Nyakiage to get married. Mosoti especially was not unmindful of the fact that the longer his sister's marriage was postponed, inside a certain limit, the higher the price he could demand for her. So Nyanguka, much too honorable a man to woo in secret, cheerily assured Mosoti there were more deer in the bush than had ever been speared, and began to make other overtures; but it was noticed that he pitched his prices lower than he had for Nyakiage.

The Lumbwas kept away from Kitutu for some months after their defeat by the men of Kanyimbo, and confined their raids to Northern Gusii for a time; but by degrees they grew bolder. Without ever attempting to conquer the whole country, they periodically raided the borders for cattle. Surrounded by enemies and at war among themselves, the Abagusii lived a precarious existence.

Times grew worse, and shocking calamities befell the Abagusii. Ninety per cent of their cattle were carried off by East Coast fever, and many a young man on the point of marrying was left without the wherewithal. The cattle Nyambati had left to his two sons all sickened and died. Nyanguka, who in his own mind had been resolved to marry Nyakiage at any price in the

event of his show of independence failing to effect a reduction in his favor, was left with but a couple of cows to get married on. He took his loss philosophically enough, and told Nyakiage's brothers not to postpone Nyakiage's marriage on his account, if someone else turned up with a good show of cattle. Of this he knew there was small chance.

After the cattle disease a great famine swept East Africa, and hundreds of Kavirondos died of starvation. Disaster followed disaster until it seemed as though some Nemesis hung over the land. The natives of Gusii traced their misfortunes to a certain dark day when the light of the sun had been blotted out at noon, and as tribulations multiplied, the thoughts of many went back to Zakawa's predictions. A terrible plague of smallpox broke out, decimating the population; and about that time the Lumbwas became more daring. They too had lost cattle and were bent upon replenishing their stock. Further and further into Gusii they carried their raids, coming each time in greater and still greater numbers.

While the Lumbwas engaged the Abagusii's attention in the north and east, the Nilotic Kavirondos, or Luos,[1] advanced against them from the north and west. Backward they pushed their Bantu neighbors, forcing them higher and higher up into the hills. Fortunately for the Abagusii, the Masais did not trouble them greatly at this time. The Kitutus were the only Abagusii clan that ever waged successful war against the Luos, and even they could never have stood against the disciplined Masai warriors had they come against them in any force.

The Gusii cattle were on the increase again when the Lumbwas redoubled their activities. They actually drove the Mugirango Abagusii into Kitutu and men-

[1] In their own language, "*Luo*"; Singular, "*Ja*luo." Their language, "*Dholuo*." To speak of this tribe as the "Jaluo" or "Kavirondo" is really incorrect.

aced Kitutu itself. But they committed a fatal mistake when they began to make off with Luo cattle, which brought the angry Luos to the aid of their old enemies. A great battle took place in which Luos and Abagusii fought side by side, and the Kitutu clan by the side of the Nyaribari clan. The result of this coup was the annihilation of the greatest host of Lumbwas that ever crossed the border, and there are those living today who describe how, after that fight, "all the rivers ran blood."

The four Abagusii who bore Nyambati to his last resting place took part in this last great fight; but Mosoti died on the bank of the Charachani[2] River, the victim of a Lumbwa spear.

For the second time within the space of a few years death threw its dark shadow across Sindiga's pathway. As he did on the occasion of his father's death, he did again for his brother—he shaved his head and bound on the middle finger of his right hand another thin, leather ring.

[2] The Ekegusii name for the Awach River, a stream flowing through South Kavirondo into Lake Victoria.

VIII

A GUSII WEDDING

A FEW DAYS AFTER THE GREAT BATTLE WHICH terminated the Lumbwa raids upon Gusii, Sindiga was seated beside a brook in the shadow of the cliff bathing a spear wound. It was the early morning of a new day and he was wondering if life held out anything more for him than endless wars and bloodshed. Nyanguka had a bright future to look forward to compared with his. He had two cows that had survived the cattle disease, and people owing him cattle besides—there was little doubt but that he would soon find himself a wife and build himself a kraal of his own. Sindiga had a kraal but no cattle; and, in this respect, Barongo was no better off. His father too had lost cattle, and with what he had left he was planning to buy another wife for himself. Sindiga reflected that, even if Kibagendi's son had no cattle to call his own, at least he had a home. Sindiga's home was broken up. There remained but an empty cattle kraal, one but in fairly good condition, and two others quite dilapidated. His sun of happiness had set, and he was left behind in the shadow.

There was a twitter of birds in the boughs overhead. They also were in the shadow, for not until the sun reached its zenith did the light ever reach those leafy recesses. Their dawn was the light of noonday. Sindiga was afterwards to see in this dawn the symbol of another, which came to Gusii in the noon of the world's history.

From a bush near by he broke a stick, and biting off

a thin strip of green bark, he used this to bind a new leaf over his wound. Well was it that Sindiga had omitted to take it to a medicine-man for treatment. It was nothing serious—a cut over his knee, nothing more —but it might easily have become serious in the hands of a native medical practitioner. The leaf was cleaner and less likely to irritate it than the medicine-man's concoctions, which as a rule will not bear analysis.

He was twisting the end of the string under when two pleasant-featured girls drew near, carrying round water-pots on very erect heads. Sindiga heard them laughing as they ascended the hill into the shadow of the cliff.

"A boy is here," Sindiga heard one say.

The other gave a swift look in his direction, taking in at a glance his fine physique, the quality of his goat-skin, and his unquestionably handsome face. A dimpling of her full cheek, and an almost imperceptible inclination of her head to one side, marked her approval of his appearance. It was impossible for her to hide it.

When the young man looked up, she bit her underlip and lowered her eyelids. She did not lower her eyelashes, for she had none. Stylish natives, male and female, pull out their long eyelashes with iron tweezers which they wear pendant from their necks, and regularly shave off their eyebrows.

Demurely she blushed—and only those familiar with the natives know how easily they achieve this, despite their dark skins. It was Sindiga who felt most abashed, however, for he was immediately fascinated by her black eyes and her unusually red lips. Her companion was pretty, but her eyes were dark brown instead of black; her lips were of a much darker hue, and she had not blushed when she saw a boy there—nor lowered her eyelids!

Sindiga felt himself growing friendly, but over the space of a minute he remained tongue-tied. Had the ar-

rivals been of his own sex he would have greeted them as a matter of course, though they had been complete strangers; but these were girls, and one of them an extraordinarily pretty girl. He had oftentimes felt less hesitation over heading a charge against hooting Lumbwas than he felt on this occasion over a mere greeting.

He knew propriety would not allow either of the girls to address him first—so, drawing a deep breath, he let them pass. Then, jumping up, he strode after them.

"Stop! Let me fill your pots for you," he said with exceeding bluntness; adding as an afterthought, "Are you both well?"

"Ay," they answered in unison.

Sindiga took the pots and filled them from a jet of water diverted from the rock face by a slender fern. In the meantime the girls drank of the clear spring water that filled a natural rock basin a few feet lower down. They drank from cupped hands; but Sindiga, joining them at the basin, drank by beating the water with the tips of his fingers, thereby causing it to stream upwards into his mouth like a fountain. This clever trick defies imitation by strangers, but an Abagusii youth who drinks water in any other way immediately brands himself as excessively effeminate.

The ice having been broken (to use a Northern expression), Sindiga felt free to open the conversation. This he did by means of questions. The girls made similar inquiries in return, which Sindiga answered frankly and fully, notwithstanding that they only partially answered his. On the subject of their parentage and their abode they were tantalizingly silent.

"Where do you come from?" he asked. "How are your parents? Have you any brothers or sisters grown up? Have you finished harvesting? What are you eating your way these days? Are you married?"

In Gusii this last question is not regarded as at all impolite.—Why should it be? Girls are either married

or unmarried, and as a rule they liked to be asked. He guessed they were not married, since, beside the rear goatskin, they wore no other apparel than the foot-wide, four-inch deep, leather fringe, commonly worn by unmarried girls. When the cattle transaction is finished, a second goatskin, which reaches from a woman's waist down to her ankles, takes the place of this fringe; but not until the last cow has been paid over and every detail of the protracted marriage ceremony has been completed, may a girl wear the dress of a married woman, even though she has been living with her husband as long as twelve months or two years. When Sindiga asked the girls if they were married, he meant, had cattle been paid for them? For if so, whether or not they were living with husbands, and whatever their attire, they were virtually married, and he might as well guard himself beforehand against any sudden flight of fancy in the direction of either.

To the young man's last question the girls answered, "Ya-ya!" (No!) and the one with the dimple and the black eyes, added: "—and don't want to be." . . . The other looked as though she would not have minded greatly. They both showed their good breeding by answering briefly and truthfully such of Sindiga's questions as they were prepared to answer, and by asking no more than was proper themselves.

A more forward young man than Sindiga might have requested a bracelet for remembrance in return for having drawn the water. Or he might have offered her one of the brass rings which decorated his wrists, in which case her acceptance would have meant engagement, provisional on his having sufficient cattle to pay for her. Gusii girls have no inclination for love-making without serious intention, being severely practical in their outlook on life. A young lady would not think of permitting even her lover to walk arm-in-arm with her, to say nothing of putting an arm round her waist! Such

liberties in public are not allowed the menfolk—not even after marriage. Bona-fide husbands can be as affectionate as they like after the guests have departed of an evening, but for at least fifteen hours out of the twenty-four, Gusii wives assert their inalienable right to reject their husbands' advances without parley. In the case of lovers, if a really exceptionally good understanding has been arrived at between the pair, either may, if it is broad daylight, place a hand on the other's shoulder, but this is the limit to which they may go—and he is a very daring young man, and she a daring "miss" who allows even this degree of familiarity.

Sindiga knew he had no cattle, and took no liberties. —It is a question whether he would have taken any had he been the wealthiest in the land; but he placed the water-pots back on their heads and wished them a hearty "sleep well." Willingly he would have carried a pot himself, but native custom forbade men or boys carrying water-pots; and woe betide that man or girl who, in Africa, ignores established custom!

The two thanked him warmly, and leaving him in the shadow of the cliff, passed on down the hill through the thick bush into the sunshine beyond.

Although real love between the sexes—at least prior to matrimony—is rare among the Abagusii, Sindiga's equilibrium was not a little disturbed by this episode. The lure of black eyes and red lips remained with him; and oftentimes afterwards something within him conjured up visions of the maiden who was their owner engaged at her home, grinding, preparing food, or working in the fields. Always he regretted not having begged some trinket from her person by way of remembrance. There was nothing in Gusii etiquette to forbid a young man thus improving a first meeting. His friend Barongo would not have hesitated for a moment; his gallantry and persuasive skill had won him many such souvenirs, which he wore together on one arm. But Sindiga was

ridiculously shy where ladies were concerned, and consequently his acquaintances among the fair and hard-working sex were few.

Two months passed, and Sindiga saw the black-eyed damsel again. He was sitting outside his kraal, whittling a block of wood into a stool, when a crowd of girl dancers rushed by. They raced headlong down the hill into a wooded valley, and he caught but a fleeting glimpse of the girl of his dreams. She appeared as hilarious as she had appeared sedate before, but he liked her none the less.

Nothing in modern dancing can be said to resemble the way those girls and women propelled themselves along, with a rhythmic beat of bare feet on the green sod, and a wild song floating upwards and away across the hills. When they halted for a moment, they did so with a jerk of the head and shoulders backward, and a loud explosion of laughter. Quickly grouping themselves in circles, and again in lines facing each other, they executed wild jig dances, in which featured a lunge which resembled more than anything else the lunge of a spearman. Anon they stooped low, and anon they leaped into the air—but always they kept perfect time; and all the time their wild song floated upwards, a shrill girl's voice predominating, and the other voices joining in the refrain. They sang of war and of the chase, mentioning heroic deeds and heroic names; they sang the praises of certain warriors and their scorn of others; but most of all they sang of the Abagusii's recent victory over the Lumbwas. Once Sindiga heard his own name lauded, coupled with the dead Nyambati's, whereat a chill sense of loss returned to him. It was overtaken immediately by a tingling of the blood as he renewed his vow ever to emulate Nyambati in his life, striving to be as worthy a son of the Great One.

When Sindiga looked again in the direction of the dancers, they were sidling away in the attitude of men

intercepting spear thrusts with shields held on high. Their every motion was in perfect time. With hoarser voices presently, and wilder gestures, they broke again into a run, and with arms upflung disappeared from sight.

. . ."Are you well, youth?" sounded a voice behind Sindiga.

"Ay," he said, turning slowly. "Why! It's you, Nyanguka, sit down!" and he proffered his stool, and seated himself on the block he had been carving. "And are you well?"

"Fine," answered the warrior, "and better off by half a dozen cattle than I was two days ago."

"Excellent! But that's more cattle than you have room for in your kraal! Where did you get them? Come! Fill the pitcher of my ear."

"Well, you see, my eldest sister, Bina, is getting married. She is marrying into a good family. Her husband is a very respectable man—lives in Bassi. He is on the Council, and is thought a good deal of by his clan. He's on very good terms with the Nyaribaris. But for his voice on the Bassi Council, I doubt if the rebel Nyaribaris would ever have got land on Nyanchwa Hill. He was shrewd though. He saw that a colony of friendly Nyaribaris on their northern border would safeguard his clan from the raids of the Kitutus. We never raid the Nyaribaris these days but what they get reinforcements from Bassi. Bad for us Kitutus—I mean, this understanding between our enemies—but there are good cattle in Bassi, I can tell you. Impracticable raiding them with the Nyaribaris in between us, but just the tribe to marry our girls off to! Cattle! . . . why, I've never seen such cattle! Bina's fortunate . . . and so am I. It's an excellent match, Sindiga lad!"

Sindiga congratulated him. If Nyanguka still had an interest in Nyakiage, this was likely to be a good thing for him too. There was small prospect of his uncle,

Kinanga's husband, helping him out with cattle in the event of his wishing to get married. Nyambati's brother had spent all his substance on wives, and was saving the cattle he had left for his sons' dowries. But here was Nyanguka, Nyakiage's long-time suitor, coming into possession of good Bassi cattle through the marriage of his sister Bina. If he would only hand these cattle over on account of Nyakiage, then he, Sindiga, might approach the father of the girl with the black eyes with a reasonable prospect of success.

Nyanguka saw his speech had made a favorable impression on Sindiga, and so came right to the point:

"If I offered you as many cattle for Nyakiage as I offered you before the cattle sickness struck Gusii," he queried, "what would you say?"

"I would say, take her; and pleased should I be that she was marrying a brave warrior and a tried and trusty friend. When will you bring the cattle along, so that I can look them over?"

"Kai! But you don't suppose I've got them yet, do you?" exclaimed Nyanguka. "I can show you a couple . . . the rest are yet to come. Won't you come over to my place tomorrow?"

Sindiga promised. He saw the two cows the next day, and they were certainly fine cattle, both in calf. . . . "I'll hand one over right away," said Nyanguka, "and you can leave me this one to milk for a time. It's yours, you know, and there will be three more coming to you."

Nyanguka was a man of his word, so Sindiga thought he had better take the one cow and thus clinch the bargain before he changed his mind. Who knew but what his friend might happen across the girl with the dimples and the black eyes, and transfer his affections to her if the match was postponed! Such things did occasionally happen.

Three days later Nyanguka went to pay his respects to Kinanga. As mother of Nyakiage it was highly im-

portant that she should be convinced of his ability to pay for a wife. Nyanguka's subsequent relation of what took place on that visit amused Sindiga not a little.

"Nyakiage," said Nyanguka with a wry smile, "had called all her friends together, and I found them waiting for me outside your uncle's kraal ——"

"To size you up in the usual way, and say what they thought about you, eh?" interpolated Sindiga.

"Just so," answered Nyanguka. "And they were critical, I can assure you. Not a blemish about me escaped their notice! Honestly, if Nyakwara had not been with me, I declare I should have turned tail; but he had told me beforehand what to expect. . . . The girls appeared satisfied at length and allowed us to pass. Your uncle was waiting for us and he greeted us jovially. Kinanga was there, and all Nyakiage's step-brothers and step-sisters, your cousins. Kinanga pretended to be sceptical about my good fortune—threw doubts, as a matter of fact, on the likelihood of my getting any more cattle from Bina's husband. But for your uncle, who befriended me, she would never have been convinced. Finally she said she would waive her objections if you yourself were satisfied."

"Good," said Sindiga. "The way is clear then."

He paid Nyanguka's brother-in-law a formal visit to make sure that he did not lack cattle, and after that arrangements for the wedding proceeded apace. Nyakiage enjoyed a ten days' "honeymoon" at Nyanguka's home, and then went back to help Kinanga prepare for the wedding feast. Nyanguka sent a young bullock and three goats to help out. His bride spent the best part of a month crushing and grinding an immense quantity of corn wherewith to make bread for the guests. At the end of that time Nyanguka received the good news that all was ready.

During the month he had been building a kraal. His father had given him permission, if he so desired, to

build a hut in his kraal; but—as Nyanguka had admitted to Sindiga—frankly, he preferred a kraal of his own.

A boisterous crowd was present at the wedding feast, given by Kinanga in honor of the bridal pair. Thirty friends of the bridegroom and as many of the bride were present. Feasting and drinking continued till long after midnight. At dawn of the following day the bullock was slaughtered, and the company breakfasted on meat and meal porridge prior to their departure.

Some may wonder where so large a gathering found sleeping accommodations. The raw Kafir would be surprised to learn that white folks, with their many-roomed houses, are often puzzled how to find accommodation for much smaller crowds. While the Abagusii pride themselves on their bedsteads, they can always sleep comfortably and soundly on the ground when occasion demands; so, when the younger wives turned out of their huts into the first and second wives' huts, taking the female guests with them, the rest of the company divided themselves among the smaller huts, and slept quite happily almost two deep on the floor.

When the guests left, Nyanguka accompanied them some distance on their way. He returned in the afternoon with five special friends who were to witness the wedding ceremony. Of course, Sindiga and Barongo were numbered among these. Nyanguka was decorated with white and red clay, made adhesive by an admixture of fat. His friends, with the exception of Sindiga, were similarly adorned. Nyambati's son retained a dislike for paint which he had conceived as a child. His chief adornment was the crown of his head. There are no male hairdressers in Gusii, by the way, the women and girls being credited with an artistic gift which the men are not supposed to possess. Nyakiage, who vied with other girls in inventing new styles of hairdressing, had achieved a triumph in the shaving of her brother's pate.

From his high forehead back and over his ears she had shaved away the new growth of hair in the likeness of two horns. The black carpet of short, woolly hair between was improved with bald streaks here and there, so as to form a symmetrical design reaching back to the nape of his neck. Nyanguka wore his hair long, and matted with red clay—also quite a triumph in its way —as far as looks went.

All five warriors arrived carrying spears and shields, and wearing ponderous feathered headgear which they doffed upon entering the kraal. Two small boys—Ongati's children—entered with them. They had a humble part to play in the marriage ceremony themselves.

The doings connected with the ordeal bride and bridegroom were now caused to undergo will not bear detailed relation. Suffice it that a bound goat was first dragged four times round the seated bride, and then killed by stifling across her lap. A young girl, who acted as bridesmaid, took part in this ceremony, which is indispensable to Gusii marriage. Throughout the day and the succeeding days, the pair received advice, warnings, and exhortations which were not soon forgotten. The death of the goat was a reminder to them of the dread consequences that would follow unfaithfulness. Disagreeable as the procedure is, its foreshadowing of death as the consequence of sin acts as a powerful restraint from wrongdoing in the absence of religion. In a way that cannot be described here the husband was made to feel that he too would not be immune from the retributive effects of transgression should *he* prove unfaithful.

The ordeal over, certain ones examined the entrails of the goat. Having satisfied themselves that the animal was free from disease, they declared to the company that the "omens were good," and proceeded to prepare the flesh of the goat for roasting.

The party spent the evening feasting and merrymak-

ing. Nyanguka and his bride would gladly have excused themselves—the latter to seek the seclusion of her mother's hut—but to have absented themselves on such an occasion would have been a serious breach of etiquette.

The following morning, Nyanguka, escorted by his five friends, went outside and hid in the long grass. As soon as the cattle had been taken out to graze, the warriors were called by a small boy to go and take up their positions in the empty kraal.

In a little while the bride appeared, red with clay and shining with oil, and carrying a horn of fat in her hand. She smiled round upon the braves in their war-paint —smiled radiantly, for the ordeal connected with her marriage was over, and only the fun remained.

"Come on!" called Barongo; and the rest of the men united in urging her to approach her husband, where he stood brandishing a spear in their midst. But between her and Nyanguka stood Ongati's two boys, barring the way with long canes. As soon as the young wife stepped forward they braced themselves as though ready to defend Nyanguka at the expense of their lives if need be. Her hesitation, and her final attack, called forth roars of laughter from the onlookers without the kraal. She slapped the fat from the horn on the boys' foreheads, who at once set to with mock zest belaboring her with the canes. Flying from them precipitately, she dived into her mother's hut, there to gather courage for a second attack.

When next she emerged, only Nyanguka stood to oppose her, with shield raised as if in defense. He made a show of resistance as she attempted to grapple with him, but finally allowed her to wrest the spear and shield both from the grip of his strong fingers. Victor over his arms, and conqueror of his heart, she returned to the hut with her booty, accompanied by her husband in the rôle of prisoner-of-war, and his five special friends.

Bride and bridegroom that evening sat on one cow-hide together, and enjoyed a simple meal of native bread and sour milk. Their friends dined with them, enlivening the meal with jests and banter. Nyakiage slept that night with her mother, and Nyanguka spent the night with his warrior friends in one of the vacated huts.

Breakfast over, the couple left for the bridegroom's home. The manner in which this journey had to be made was doubtless calculated to impress upon them the need for always maintaining the utmost decorum on public highways, where their behavior would be open to observation by the youth of the countryside. Nyanguka led the way, the bride following sedately behind at a distance of several yards. Neither might look to the right, or to the left, or behind. In her two hands, pressed against her left side, Nyakiage carried a gourd of sour milk. The gay crowd who accompanied them cried out to the passers-by not to pass between the newly-married couple on pain of forfeiting a goat. This forfeit was ruthlessly exacted from all transgressors.

At length their destination was reached. In front of a hut outside the kraal stood a wrinkled old woman, waiting.

"Give the gourd to me, child," she said, having first greeted Nyakiage effusively. Standing to one side she nodded for her to enter the hut first. Nyanguka was the last to enter.

Again the pair were required to sit side by side on a cow-hide and partake of refreshment together. During their meal the gourd of sour milk stood before them untouched, to be afterwards greedily devoured by Nyanguka's younger brothers and sisters.

At sundown the two repaired to their own hut, accompanied by a number of friends. Inside, they were instructed to stand facing a roughly-hewn, low bedstead where they had to declare solemnly to each other:

"I will be the first upon this bed." They complied laughingly, the bride taking up her position at her husband's left. They declared simultaneously that they would be first upon the bed, and at a given signal, jumped. When the bride landed first, there was considerable joking at the bridegroom's expense. Seated on this bed they partook of the evening meal, the guests seating themselves on the floor of the hut.

When the repast had been disposed of, Nyanguka gave his wife her "wedding ring." This was a hollowed circlet of iron, which he was required to fasten on her right ankle with a strip of ox-hide. A neighbor's wife was called in to fix a similar ring on her left ankle.

The five comrades-in-arms spent the night in a hut adjacent to Nyanguka's. Singing to the twanging of a harp was kept up till a late hour of the night, and when they turned in at last they all slept soundly.

When Sindiga strolled outside the next morning, he found Barongo pegging out the skin of the goat they had eaten, to dry. Nyanguka stood watching him. He too wore a "wedding ring," but his was a plain strip of goatskin, which encircled the middle finger of his right hand, and, passing over the back of his hand, was wound round his wrist.

To their hearty greeting Sindiga answered somewhat abstractedly that he was well. In the night he had dreamed of the black-eyed girl of his infatuation, and she was still on his mind.

Recalling himself quickly he inquired if the bridegroom had passed a good night.

"You do not appear to have passed a very good night yourself," replied Nyanguka.

In the course of the ensuing conversation Nyanguka and Barongo between them unraveled Sindiga's secret, discovering to their huge satisfaction that he was wildly "in love." The discovery affected them differently: Barongo waxed humorous—Nyanguka sympathetic.

Both expected from him an immediate recital of the manner of his engagement and all his inward emotions.

"Sindiga," said the older man, when he showed no inclination to enlighten them, "at least tell us the name of her father."

"I omitted to ask his name," Sindiga replied, "and I have no notion where he lives."

"Do you see her often?"

"Twice I have seen her since the last Lumbwa raid."

"And you like her that well?"

"I'd ask her father tomorrow if I thought he would agree to two cattle and the promise of three more when I get them from you!"

". . . and you knew where he lived," added Barongo.

"Exactly," Sindiga admitted.

Then suddenly he realized that his friends were looking at something or someone at his rear. . . . That "something" or "someone" was approaching. . . . A leather skirt flapped, and Sindiga heard the thump of a heavy water-pot being set down on the grass behind him.

"I will take you to him," a melodious voice declared.

Sindiga wheeled round to come face to face with a pair of gleaming black eyes, a mouth which sat cosily between two alluring dimples, and the erect figure of a strapping girl. She stood with her back to the kraal fence, and smiled. . . . Even so she had stood in his dream of the night before.

Taken thoroughly aback, Sindiga could only repeat her words:

"You will take me to him?"

"Surely, I will," gaily answered the fair one. Touching the pot daintily with her toes, she continued, addressing Nyanguka: "Valiant one, just stay by this for me until we come back."

Sindiga looked his amazement from one to the other, while Nyanguka looked reproachfully at Sindiga.

"So *she* is your choice of a wife!" exclaimed he, adding seriously: "I shouldn't go with her if I were you" —at which Barongo looked surprised.

"You had better come; I will show you the way," urged the smiling damsel.

. . . She was the same girl, yet different, Sindiga thought.

"Let her take you. At least you can tell her father you'll give him five cattle, and see what he says," advised Barongo. ". . . I'll come along with you," he added.

"You might as well save yourselves the trouble," declared Nyanguka; but for once his advice was spurned. Sindiga flung an imaginary spear at him, and joining hands with Barongo bade the girl lead on.

Going hand in hand, they followed the nymph where she led, down through the *misabisabi* trees and across the brook, till they came out upon a rock-strewn hillside.

"That's where my father lives," said their guide, pointing to a large kraal, fenced around with cacti. "Go right in and speak to him. If he agrees, I agree."

The two friends ran their eyes over the huts. When they looked again for the girl she had vanished. They were almost sure she had not entered the kraal, but neither was she anywhere on the hillside.

They were about to move forward when, from inside one of the huts, there came a sound distantly resembling the tinkle of a Gusii cow-bell. They listened intently while an eerie feeling crept over them both; presently they heard a voice speaking:

"The makers of that article"—and again the undefinable sound reached them—"the makers of that article will one day be seen in this country. Houses without cattle enclosures will they build on Nyamosaka Hill, and in that day the woman lacking a man child will weep!"

Simultaneously they recognized the voice of the mad elder—he who had sworn that for a sign his daughters should not marry—not till all his extravagant predictions had been fulfilled. Filled with a sudden, superstitious terror, they raced down the hill, and back through the woods to Nyanguka's kraal. There they found the bridegroom of the day before sound asleep on the sward, but the water-pot he had been told to mind was no longer there.

On the third day after Nyanguka's wedding the bride was presented with a goatskin apron. This article was long enough to reach down to her ankles, and was to be her chief badge of matrimony; but before she might don it, she had one more ceremonial visit to pay Kinanga.

A young boy led the way, carrying the right hind leg of a goat, a present from Nyanguka to the bride's mother, and with her went her bridesmaid. It was Kinanga's business to add yet five more rings to each of her ankles, and adjust the goatskin apron for her. . . . No more after this might she wear the short fringe appertaining to her girlhood days.

The following morning, as a parting present, Kinanga gave her a heavy hideful of flour to start housekeeping on. Her bridesmaid also carried a large quantity of flour in a basket. The small boy was not expected to carry anything, as his duty was to protect them from the perils of the journey. He went on ahead gaily swinging a cane. At intervals along the road he hid in the grass, and sprang out upon the pair, demanding payment for escorting them. The young wife was prepared, and each time gave him some trinket—usually a brass or iron bracelet. Before the boy would allow her to enter her mother-in-law's hut, she had to make him one more payment, which she did with a smile that quite captured the gallant highwayman's heart.

That evening, when she repaired to her husband's hut with the food she had cooked, she found him feigning sleep. . . . For this also she had been prepared. Leaning over him, she softly called him by all the complimentary names she could think of. This was an essential, but unwitnessed part of the marriage ceremony. He continued to feign sleep till he heard pronounced the one he had mentally reserved for himself after marriage. At the name "Lion," he raised his head, and the two sat down to their evening meal man and wife at last—but Nyakiage lacked a name.

As a married woman Nyakiage too was entitled to a new name. Once more the friends gathered—Sindiga, Barongo, and Machuki among them. Many relatives and neighbors came, bringing with them pathetic little wedding presents for the bride. No one would have perceived from Sindiga's deportment that his heart was heavy with the sense of a new lack. It is a Kaffir's second nature to "rejoice with those that do rejoice," and it was Sindiga's part now to rejoice with Nyanguka. This he did whole-heartedly, envying him a little, no doubt, and probably wondering when he would pay over the rest of the cattle he was owing.

Nyakiage sat down with a crowd of unmarried girls. Seated on a large, low stool was an old man, wise in the knowledge of names. Facing his bride, and with the warriors in their paint at his right and left, sat Nyanguka. On his knees he held a basketful of black, native bread.

Presently the old man commenced a gay chant, into which he introduced a seemingly endless variety of girls' names. Addressing Nyakiage by each in turn he called down blessings upon her head, and amid considerable merriment at the half-forgotten names he recalled, the warriors joined in a refrain expressive of their approval.

Old Man: Her name shall be Muráa,
And blessed shall she be!
Warriors: Huh! Huh!
Old Man: Or it shall be Kerúóo,
And blessed shall she be!
Warriors: Huh! Huh!
Old Man: Or how about Nyamwíta?
And blessed shall she be!
Warriors: Huh! Huh!
Old Man: We'll call her Nyanziabóka
And blessed shall she be!
Warriors: Huh! Huh!
Old Man: Or let it be Kwambóka,
And blessed shall she be!
Warriors: Huh! Huh!

For the space of half an hour the chant continued. Doubtless, when a name failed the old man, rather than break the rhythm of the chant, he did not scruple to invent one.

—"Kemúnto it shall be,
And blessed shall she be."

"Huh! . . ." At last he had succeeded in hitting upon a name that pleased the bride. Snatching up the basket of bread she ran off with it, and took her place among the married women. The name given her at birth she had renounced at about the age of ten, and "Nyakiage" had been a name of her own choosing. "Kemunto" was her third name, and the name she would henceforth bear through life.

The pleasures of maidenhood belonged now to the past, but this did not worry her; her brother's choice of a husband for her met her ideal. A big, kindly faced woman—Nyanguka's mother—enveloped Nyakiage in her arms, and she forgot the past in contemplation of the future. She felt a responsible woman now—a heroine among her girl companions, and, as wife of Nyanguka, a not unimportant member of the community.

When the party broke up, Sindiga said to Barongo:

"Come, let us walk." They climbed the cliff, and from its rocky summit watched the golden sun dip down behind the Gwasi Hills.

"It is good to be alive," said Barongo.

"Ay, and good to have a friend," said Sindiga. . . . He continued after a moment's silence: "Do you know what the mad elder once said to me? . . . 'God is the Abagusii's Friend,' he said."

Thoughtfully Barongo made reply: "It may be true. . . . He was our friend without a doubt when we thrashed the Lumbwas."

. . . Overhead the sky darkened. Thunder boomed in the distance, and a few cold drops of rain fell.

"Let's go down," said Barongo. So they climbed down, hand in hand; and as they descended the Great Cliff, an officer of the British Government, with a small retinue of black soldiers, was crossing the Luo border into Bunjare—the first white man ever to gaze round on the green hills of Gusii.

PART II

AFTER THE WHITE MEN CAME

IX

SINDIGA'S RESOLVE

TEN YEARS HAVE ROLLED BY. THEY HAVE BEEN years of transformation for East Africa—years of culminating jealousies and international strife for the civilized world. The first white men came to Gusii in the year 1907, and in 1914 the Great War broke out in Europe.

One of the first acts of the British Government upon entering East Africa was to define the boundaries of the different tribes, thus putting an end to the destructive tribal wars which were fast depopulating the country. Law-courts were set up and justice administered; hospitals were established for the treatment of the sick, prisons for law-breakers, and schools for everyone. Deliverance came to tribes and individuals hitherto oppressed, and an era of apparent peace and prosperity was ushered in.

Except for the phenomenon of the European war, when the white races fought each other on African soil, Nyanguka may have been led to reflect that at last had come a tribe sufficiently powerful to prevent war. But it was divinely appointed that the truth concerning human frailty should not be hid. The spectacle of two great European nations fiercely at war with each other proved to the natives that the white men were almost, if not quite, as human as themselves.

The headquarters of the British Government at Kisii[1]

[1] A township in the Gusii Reserve; a Swahili rendering of the name "Gusii."

were within about fifty miles of the border of what was then German East Africa—now Tanganyika Mandated Territory. Kisii township was also in a direct line with Kisumu, the terminus of the Uganda Railway, and was attacked by the Germans in the course of their advance on British East Africa.

The war in East Africa dragged on until near the close of 1917, and when the Armistice was signed in 1918, the belligerents had given sufficient evidence of their might and prowess both to awe and to enlighten the native tribes, including the Abagusii.

The white man's advent and the Great War are matters of the past, but the white man's law-courts and the white man's soldiers remain. They are vital, unforgettable facts, which parade themselves up and down before the native's consciousness, tempting him to inquire as to *his* place in the scheme of things.

That which impresses the aborigines most concerning the white man is not his religion, nor even his morals, but the multitudinous evidences of his might; not his goodness, but his guns. All the same, except during the Great War, the latter have been less in evidence in Kenya Colony than the former. The Abagusii admit that the white men came peaceably. In Kenya extensive reserves were set aside for the native tribes, and their interests jealously guarded by the Government. That this was done is a testimony to the growth of the administrative genius of Britain, irrespective of whether these Reserves have come to stay or not. It is possible that in the course of a few years the white and colored races of East Africa may find their interests so interwoven that the Reserve system will prove no longer desirable.

The ten years that have elapsed since the date of Nyanguka's wedding have been years of transformation for the whole of East Africa. The old fighting days are no more. Lumbwas and Abagusii, Masais and Luos, are compelled to live at peace with each other. Cattle raid-

ing is absolutely forbidden. Without proclaiming or making war, the white men simply declared themselves rulers of the land, to the end that the tribes might live in peace and prosper. Instead of robbing the Abagusii of their land, as their enemies of old time would have done, they had added to it, and protected the whole from invasion.

In sparsely inhabited country far to the east of Gusii the white men had erected beautiful homesteads and were farming the waste land. Forests had been cut down and towns had sprung up in hitherto uninhabited highlands. Cold mountainsides and waterless plain had been taken possession of by these newcomers, irrigated and cultivated. As long as they were unmolested, the natives found the white men friendly and entertaining neighbors; only, when attacked, they retaliated fiercely. They claimed equal rights with the cosmopoly of black and brown races, migrating southwards continually from the north and east, to enter and dwell in the land. This right was rarely questioned, although disputes often arose as to boundaries. It is conceded by most of the tribes that every race is entitled to as much land as it can populate and defend.

Civilization's advance in East Africa has been slow. The natives have not been suddenly and violently plunged into an environment unnatural to them. The precipitate industrialization of the natives of South Africa, following the gold-rush, did probably as much harm to them as did slavery to the negroes of America. In countries like East Africa, where the white settlers are mostly farmers, the change is more gradual and productive of more good. The natives live chiefly in their reserves, and ordinarily only such as covet the luxuries of civilization need go to work outside. This is encouraged by a system of labor-recruiting.

Many Abagusii still wear goatskins or cow-hides as did their progenitors; marriage is still conducted in the

ancient manner; polygamy, if not on the increase, is at least as common now as then. Like the Luos of the Lake shore, the Abagusii are slow to relinquish the customs of their forefathers.

Sindiga was as much impressed by the endowments and accomplishments of the white men as the average native. He was, nevertheless, numbered among those who deplored civilization's advance because it tended to break down tribal customs and tribal tradition. He had lived all his days in the Gusii Reserve, and knew little about the busy world outside. His prejudices sprang chiefly from his observations of those natives who, returning from European employ, made themselves conspicuous by trying to imitate the foreigners.

East Africa was undergoing a transformation, but the great cliff "Manga" in Gusii had not changed. It still frowned darkly over a land that clung to old ideas and old ideals, while the rest of East Africa was responding to the white man's touch. These white strangers were alchemists, turning fire, and water, and food, and the very brawn and sinew of the Africans, into gold. The Abagusii fought feebly against this new magic. Still they fight; but soon the lure of gold will grip them too, and the strong will trample the weak underfoot in the market-place. The young men will say to the old and infirm, "We cannot sow your seed, and harvest your crops, as in the olden days. We need our time and our strength to get gold." And the householder will say to the stranger, "We cannot entertain you as we used; don't you know this house is my property? This food is mine—*mine*; it is hard to get. You too must enter the struggle or be lost."

Nyanguka had been married ten years when Sindiga, sitting upon an overhanging ledge of rock above the Great Cliff, came to a decision which brought sorrow to Barongo's heart. The two had climbed the precipice together, and in the cool of the morning had sat and

watched the sunlight drive back the shadow from Nyamosaka Hill. There, on the old battleground of the two strongest rival Gusii clans, dwelt the white man who had come to be their judge and ruler. His great house ("great" by comparison only with their own primitive dwellings) was hid in the trees, and so were the houses of the other white men who aided him in the administration of justice. There were also two rows of Indian shops, and the barracks of the East African Police. Lower down, on Bigendi Hill, a market had sprung up, where the women gathered—not mushrooms, as old Zakawa had foretold—but round, silver rupees. From all parts of Gusii they came, exchanging sweet potatoes, bananas, corn, and firewood for coin. There was also on Bigendi Hill a small stone building where medicines were dispensed to the sick—monument to one incomprehensible weakness of an otherwise strong tribe, who obliged subject races to pay tax, and subsequently returned a portion of it in voluntary work on their behalf! The natives are utterly unable to understand such unwonted generosity.

From a kraal far below the two friends came the sound of male voices singing. Barongo climbed a little way down the cliff to listen. It was a chorus of old men, gathered in Maruani's kraal. The words they sang reached Barongo's ear:

"The world is growing old,
—Huh! Huh!
And men are growing bad,
—Huh! Huh!
And no one cares to sing the old songs,
—Huh! Huh!
Of seed time and of harvest,
Of battle and the chase,
—Huh! Huh!
Give us good songs, girls,
—Huh! Huh!
Songs with fewer 'cobwebs' in them!"

The soliloquy indulged in by Sindiga during his friend's absence was not of a cheerful character. He had more than one cause for melancholy reflections. By the time Zakawa's prophecies had come true and he had removed his ban from his daughter's marriage, the fever had taken his cattle and they had all died. Without cattle he could not marry. Time, it is true, had cooled his passion for the mad elder's daughter, and as the years went by he had even shown a stoical indifference to the subject of matrimony; but he was beginning, at last, to feel dissatisfied with a bachelor's lot—exceedingly so. Nyanguka had taken a second wife, but he still owed Sindiga a couple of cows on account of Nyakiage's dowry.[2] Neither of his wives was satisfied with the "dowries" which had been paid for them. The old man—Sindiga's uncle—who, it will be remembered, had inherited Kinanga upon Nyambati's death, still had no cattle to spare with which he could help out his nephew, for his own sons were growing up and requiring cattle with which to secure wives for themselves. Barongo was a favorite with the Kitutu girls, but strangely enough he had never shown the slightest interest in the subject of marriage, and consequently was unable to sympathize with his friend.

Nyambati's son frowned down upon the green undulations of Kitutu. His gaze wandered from clustering native kraals to green hillside pastures, finally to rest questioningly upon the waters of the Kavirondo Gulf, glimmering white in the dim distance. There, he had been told, the white man's ships passed to and fro. To him the Victoria Nyanza meant the Great Sea, for he knew of no other. There, at the head of the Gulf, the white men had built a small town, and there the railway ended. What was the railway anyway? he wondered.

[2] Strictly speaking, the "purchase price," though for want of a better word, "dowry" is quite commonly used in Kenya to designate the price paid for a wife.

He had heard of the long, oblong houses set on wheels, and of screaming engines which belched forth smoke, but he had never seen them. It would be interesting actually to behold such marvels, he thought.

His gaze wandered slowly back to the wide-sweeping country that lay beneath the escarpment. It had changed. Great roads crossed it leading away into Luo-land, Lumbwa and Masai. Every few months Barongo and he were required to go and help hoe one of those wide roads, in company with other able-bodied men of Kanyimbo. Men who had once been fighters hated to have to do this work—hated their chiefs for compelling them to do it; and Gusii women, preferring not to see their menfolk reduced to what seemed to them servitude, often worked on the roads in their stead. Sometimes the women were driven to work with blows by savage native policemen in the employ of the chiefs.

There were other changes. All over Gusii were springing up plantations of eucalyptus, wattle, and silver-oak. These trees had been introduced by the white men. The seed was dispensed freely to the chiefs, who began by planting small copses to give shelter to roadside camps, and later took to planting trees near their own kraals. These trees made quite a difference to the landscape and to the countryside. But next to the tax, it was the roads —the wide, winding roads over hill and dale—that Sindiga hated most. Along them the white men came and went, on bicycles and in motor cars; along them Indian storekeepers drove their wagons, and black strangers passed with their merchandise. These broad roads had broken down the barriers between the tribes, and were used by all races. Luos covered with frightful sores, often emaciated by disease, traveled them daily on their way to the native hospital; and the Abagusii, dreading the spread of disease in their midst, fervently wished that the hospital had never been built.

So as Sindiga gazed round upon his native land, he

became dissatisfied and restless. It occurred to him that he might leave the country for a time as others had done, and see something of lands that were afar off—travel in one of those great trains to the white man's land, and see the world's wonders for himself. The one way to do it was to volunteer for work outside his reserve. As he reflected, the idea grew upon him. If he contracted for work, his employer would pay his expenses; he had no home ties, and if Barongo would not go with him, he would not mind going alone. And some day he would come back and hold his friend spellbound with tales of all he had seen and done. It was the spirit of adventure calling to him.—By the time Barongo returned, climbing hand over hand up the cliff face, Sindiga's mind had been made up.

"What! Go and work for the white man!" exclaimed Kibagendi's son in frank dismay.

"Yes, why not?" answered Sindiga. "Work, and get paid for it."

Barongo gave a long-drawn-out whistle of astonishment, and clapped his hands in the utmost distress—the Gusii way of expressing acute grief or anger, the clapping of the hands for pleasure being beyond their comprehension.

"Whew ——! But do you really mean what you are saying?"

"Why not?" Sindiga said again, and gazed across the white waters of the gulf.

Barongo gave vent to a torrent of fervent expostulations.

"Are not the white men our conquerors?" he cried. "Eh! but they will beat you and make you carry heavy loads. You will work till you are sick. Beware of all white men, Sindiga. They are pig-eaters[3] and enemies. They kill men from afar off. They do not measure

[3] The Abagusii hold pigs, snails, and fish in abhorrence, but eat grasshoppers, flying ants, and locusts alive, and with relish.

strength in their warfare, but cunning against valor. Did they not kill hundreds of our young men? Would not their black soldiers have killed you and me if we had not hidden ourselves securely? And have you forgotten how one fire-weapon killed five Kitutus where they hid in the cave just below us? Did they not burn our kraals and take away from us thousands of cattle?"

Barongo had reference to the punishments inflicted on the Abagusii for looting the Kisii township during the Great War, and for having attempted the murder of one of the first European administrators of South Kavirondo. Sindiga did not deny the truth of Barongo's words, but he expressed the commoner view of his tribe when he declared: "It was our own fault. The white strangers came peaceably, but the wild tongue of the daughter of Okangiti and the spear of Otao were our undoing. The daughter of Okangiti, stood behind Otao and urged him on. 'Throw your spear,' she screamed. 'Kill the white man!' And Otao threw his spear, so that the white man fell with it in his side; but his would-be murderer fled and hid. Thus did Otao shed the blood of the white stranger who came to dwell peaceably among us. Thus brought he calamity upon us all; for the white man whom he attacked was greatly beloved by his race. All our subsequent misfortunes were the result of the sin of Otao."

In vain Barongo stormed his protests. Sindiga was stubborn in his determination to travel. "I agree," he coolly replied, "that the white man's ways are not our ways, but all the same I believe he wishes to be friendly."

"His friendship is a shadow," declared Barongo vehemently. "It is a closed door. I have seen white men meet—over there on Nyamosaka Hill. They nodded, but did not take time to greet each other. I have heard much concerning their customs. They shut their houses before eating. Also when one white man visits another, he

receives no salutation till he has introduced himself. The black man runs to welcome his visitor whoever he may be, and rains greetings upon him. I have heard that white men in Kisumu town pay[4] each other with rupees for every bit of food they eat! The white man sells a cow which dies, and never makes the loss good. We Abagusii pay again even that which the recipient has received and lost."[5]

Sindiga admitted that the white man's customs were not good, and relapsed into silence—nevertheless, he was thinking furiously. Barongo refrained from saying more on the subject and gazed away in the direction of Nyamosaka. That evening it was a silent pair who descended the pass together and threaded their way through the thickets of *misabisabi* trees back to the kraals of Kanyimbo.

The next day and the next found Sindiga roaming the crest of Manga—but alone; and always his eyes sought the end of the Kavirondo Gulf, where was the railway which carried men away to the white man's land; and the more he reflected—studying all the while that white ribbon of water between him and the railway—the stronger became his resolve to travel. He would see with his own eyes that which others had seen and reported.

Apart from this new ambition and the possibility of it bringing him wealth, the future held little for him that he cared to reflect upon; it loomed as black as some of the worst dreams he had ever had of his tribe's future. When his mind reverted to the present—to the plantations on Nyamosaka and the hated roads, to the death of his cattle, or to the loosening hold of his race upon

[4] A supposition based on vague rumors of a hotel there.

[5] A. buys a goat from B. for cash. If B. loses the money, and can produce witnesses to testify to his having hunted for it and failed to find it, A. is bound by Gusii custom to pay for his goat a second time. We Westerners naturally question the justice of such a transaction, and as the courts do not recognize it the custom is dying out.

ancient tradition, to the spirit of lawlessness abroad everywhere, and the spread of evil customs in their midst through contact with other tribes—he became increasingly restless; without a doubt, the world was "growing old."

If Zakawa had found occasion to lament an increasing indisposition of the people towards hospitality in the days before the white man came, it is to be doubted whether, in his extreme old age, he witnessed any improvement. The natives soon learned the possibilities of profiteering. In the early days of Christian missions in East Africa, a desire for knowledge induced many to attend school. Later education was less eagerly sought after than monetary wealth. The Abagusii take less pride in their cornfields and gardens than they used to do, trading having proved more profitable and far easier. While they have always confessed admiration for the Masais' skill in warfare, they used to crow over their enemies' inability to dig; but now even the Abagusii are coming to regard agriculture as a mean pursuit. As a result of contact with Swahilis, Nubians, Somalis, and Baganda, many nowadays spend their whole time trading in cattle and skins. Sindiga had the utmost contempt for this profession. That so many of the "sons of Manga" should have taken to it was, in his opinion, a clear sign that the country was "going to the bad."

He fingered a metal case at his side. In it was the *kipandi* he had been given by the white man. This was a paper on which was written his own name and Nyambati's, his address—Kanyimbo in Kitutu—and the name of his clan. It contained also a reproduction of his thumb-print, and vacant spaces for the particulars of any work he did for wages, the date of his engagement and dismissal, and the pay received. Every native of British East Africa was obliged to carry one of these documents. Signed by an employer, it became a native's passport to the place of his employment. By the numbers

and thumb-prints on these *kipandis*, the Government of Kenya is enabled to keep track of persons traveling outside their own reserves, gain information concerning the labor supply, follow up deserters, and track native criminals. Sindiga, however, had heard it stated that the *kipandi* was a badge of servitude, and consequently hated it as much as he hated the road work. But now he reflected that with it he could travel beyond the boundaries of Gusii, and amid wonders unimaginable forget his cares. At the same time he could be earning money with which to buy cattle for a marriage dowry.

His mind more than once reverted to Barongo's wild expostulations against his resolve. Was his friend right? Was the white man hard and cruel, and their worst enemy? Was it sheer folly to think of going to work for an alien tribe? He had confessed his hunger for travel to more than one, and all had said the same thing; all deplored his resolution. Machuki, a very old friend of his, had waxed as eloquent in his protests as Barongo. The young men with whom he had spoken had all expostulated vehemently. Nyanguka had advised gravely, "Don't think of such a thing, lad." This seriously given piece of advice, from a man whom Sindiga looked up to as his elder, had come nearer to dissuading him from his projected adventure than all the more eloquent denunciations of white men uttered by the younger men.

Thought he: If I come to an agreement with some white man, offer to work for him, and leave my home to go and live on his compound, will he treat me as a friend?—When he had helped other Abagusii harvest their grain, or had dug the gardens of the infirm, he had been treated as "one of the family"; but now he was thinking of helping strangers—how would they treat him? Recalling Nyanguka's injunction and the wealth of meaning which lay behind it, he did begin to waver; but soon, as his thoughts returned to the changes

that had come over his native land, to his orphaned condition, and the blankness of his future if he stayed in Gusii, his resolution returned. Come what might, he would travel and see the world.

It was in a hopeful and happy frame of mind that he paid a last visit to his aged grandmother Muraa, to Kinanga, his foster-mother, and to his married sister Nyakiage—Kemunto, as she was called after her marriage. He made a special effort before he left to prevail upon Nyanguka to hunt up the two cows he was owing for her, as much to insure the peace of his home as to help himself; for Nyakiage was sorely dissatisfied with the price her husband had paid for her, and in spite of her affection for Nyanguka, had more than once threatened to run away if he did not speedily pay up.

Finding his brother-in-law in possession of but one cow and a few goats, Sindiga contented himself with making him promise that he would pay the rest of his debt "sometime." To this the happy husband agreed readily enough; whereat Sindiga expressed satisfaction, and having briefly acquainted all his bachelor friends with his determination to travel, he set his face squarely in the direction of an adventure in "White Man's Land."

In the market-place on Bigendi Hill he found an Arab labor recruiter. The man was painting a glowing picture of life "up the line"[6] to an interested crowd of natives, and listing the names of those willing to contract for work. Sindiga and half a dozen others agreed. In high spirits they followed the Arab along the wide road as far as the mud and wattle house of the European who employed him.

On a previous occasion, much too distant for Sindiga to remember, this identical Arab—then a young man—had bargained with Kinanga for him; bought him, in

[6] Meaning anywhere away from the Reserve reached by way of the railway.

fact, for a few coils of copper wire, and borne him away screaming from his home under the Great Cliff. Utterly unconscious of this fact, Sindiga now followed the recruiter cheerfully along the highway, past lines of other Abagusii seeking employment, and into what seemed to him an extraordinarily large room. In reality, it was not more than fourteen feet square. Behind a table sat a real white man, who asked each volunteer a few brief questions and bade them all line up outside. Presently they all—Kitutus, Nyaribaris, and recruits of other Gusii clans—trooped in a body after the white man and his Arab servant to the District Commissioner's office. Their contracts having been duly signed by an official, they were allowed to return home for three days, after which time they were to come again, prepared for a long journey.

Sindiga would have preferred to have gone that same day. Like most Africans, he greatly disliked leave-takings; consequently he did little visiting during the three days allotted, but spent the time instead roaming the escarpment.

When the women of Kanyimbo heard that Nyambati's son was ready to depart, they vied with his relatives in the business of loading him up with provisions for the journey. He was given a red cotton blanket by the white man, which he wrapped round himself "toga" fashion, with a knot over one shoulder. The rest of the workmen did similarly with their blankets. Those who were unable to afford belts tied their blankets to their loins with strips of cow-hide or native string. A Nyaribari, who had been to work for the white men before, was put in charge of the rest. All their fares across the Kavirondo Gulf had been paid in advance, and this man carried a pass which covered the whole gang.

Their way lay for the first fifteen miles over the green, but long since deforested, Gusii hills. The highway straightened out where it began to trace its way

over the more gentle undulations of Luo country, here through scrubby bush and there over grassy plain, with the waters of the gulf ever and anon gleaming white and mysterious in the distance.

Notwithstanding the fact that border warfare was forbidden by the Government, the travelers' tongues were loosened when they came into sight of the Luo kraals, and they sang the old war songs, interpolating them with shrieks, and grunts, and shouts of defiance; but soon, the challenges not being taken up, they relapsed into silence, and contented themselves with passing jokes about the people they met. The fenced villages and other characteristic features of Luo country amused them greatly. As they went along they marveled not a little at the absence of streams. Although they crossed several dry stream-beds, practically the only running water they saw between the Gusii border and the lake was the Awach River, called by them the Charachani.

Before they descended to the sun-scorched plain, which hems the Kavirondo Gulf, they passed through a wide belt of pleasant woodland. The trees were somewhat stunted, but none the less beautiful. The only expression of appreciation they drew from the Abagusii was "What tip-top firewood!" They were severely practical, like all born Africans, and had but little use for the purely ornamental. Deer found covert in these woods, and in one place a string of baboons crossed the road ahead of them, barking out their antipathy to strangers as soon as they had passed. Guinea fowl scurried away with a great noise at their approach, and bright-colored birds flitted from bough to bough overhead.

Upon reaching the lake shore, the travelers stood and gazed across the white expanse of placid water in astonishment and awe. It was only a gulf of the great Victoria Nyanza, but even it was much larger than ever they had imagined.

The wayfarers slept that evening at a rest-camp a little removed from the lake shore. In the morning they rose betimes. The sailboat in which they were to make the twenty-mile crossing had arrived at the rock pier just before dawn with the mails for South Kavirondo. The Swahili captain was waiting for a European, who was journeying to Kisumu, but who had not yet arrived. While the gang of workmen waited to go aboard, they watched the Luo fishermen at work.

Speedily the Abagusii conceived a new respect for their old enemies. The fishers stood waist deep in the water, baling fish out of papyrus reed nets into enormous baskets. Crocodiles often frequented these waters, and across the bay hippopotami were sporting in numbers, but the fishers were altogether intent upon their work. The fish of Lake Victoria have been the standby of the tribes living on its shores in many a time of famine. In all probability the Abagusii would sooner have faced Masai spears than have waded thus in those mysterious waters; for while a large proportion of Luos can swim, and all feel quite at home in raft or canoe, the hill tribes dread the necessity of entering or even crossing deep water.

It was with exceedingly great trepidation that the small company of Abagusii entered the tiny sailboat, and took their places in its stern. They had the calmest of crossings, but all the way they clung onto the sides of the boat as if for dear life. Sindiga was no braver than the rest of the passengers. More than once when the sail swung over, or the gentlest of waves hit the boat broadside, causing it to give ever so slight a lurch, he thought that his end had come. A number of them experienced seasickness, and one or two wished they had never started out.

If the lake inspired the travelers with awe, the land beyond surpassed their wildest dreams of civilization; and yet Kisumu was only a very small town, inhabited

chiefly by Indians, and boasting not more than a hundred resident Europeans.

Luo men, women, and children, loitered in the streets, or hung around the Indian bazaar. Some of these wore cast-off remnants of European clothing; but those who had not been affected by a desire to copy the "foreigners" dressed like the Luos on the other side of the gulf. Their women wore nothing beyond a six-inch square of cloth doubled over a leather string in front, and a bushy tail behind, which latter adornment was their badge of matrimony. In this respect they resembled certain tribes[7] living near the Albert Nyanza to the north. Their menfolk showed a similar aversion to clothing. Some of them wore nothing at all, but gloried in paint instead.

The Luo tribe came originally from the regions of the Upper Nile. They had gradually secured for themselves the country surrounding the Kavirondo Gulf, beating back the former Bantu inhabitants by sheer force of numbers. The Abagusii retreated eastward and southward and finally succeeded in making a stand against their enemies in the hills which they occupy at the present day. Besides their contempt for clothing, the Luos are notorious for their love of tobacco, and their practice of extracting six teeth from the lower jaw. The Abagusii, like the Masais, satisfy themselves with extracting two teeth only. This leaves a gap sufficiently large to spit through, they say!

Sindiga gazed in astonishment at all he could see in Kisumu. This was little enough, to be sure, for the sun was setting when they landed, and their leader was in a hurry; but Sindiga viewed everything through the eyes of an absolute savage, unused even to the outskirts

[7] There are some striking resemblances between the Luo people and the Latuka, Bari, and Obbo folk of the Upper Nile region, not only in respect to their customs but also in respect to language.

of civilization. Train engines puffed away in the neighborhood of the docks, but none were near when the party of workmen from the hills ran warily across the tracks. That night they slept on the floor of a large barn, within hearing of shunting freight engines and a score of other unfamiliar sounds.

Sindiga, with the others, was standing on the platform the following morning when their train moved into the station. Having been bidden to stand their ground, they one and all faced the engine's approach with considerable outward calm. They stood watching it, all eyes, till it drew within a few yards of them, thundering dreadfully and belching forth clouds of smoke; but when it emitted a fearfully prolonged whistle, even their leader gave a start, and the rest of them, deeming discretion the better part of valor, rushed pell-mell out of the station.

The "iron rhinoceros" came speedily to a halt, and a laughing crowd of Luos escorted the gang back to the station. Warriors all, their mortification and sense of disgrace were painfully acute. They joined heartily in the laugh against themselves, however, as the Bantu races always will, and decided they would not be scared so easily a second time.

The work for which they had contracted had to do with railway extension. Others besides the Abagusii boarded the same train, recruited for the same work. When the locomotive moved out of the station, the native passengers aboard commenced singing with one accord in their different tongues.

The railway journey occupied twenty-four hours, and Sindiga to this day regards it as the most thrilling experience of his life. His clearest memories of that first train ride are associated with noise, and smoke, and great iron bridges, which last made a tremendous rattling sound as they crossed over them; also rivers of sparks at night, which rushed, and eddied, and whirled

above the swaying coaches. Most of all, he remembers that the coldest place in the world (to him) is the Mau Escarpment, just before descending into the Great Rift Valley.

At the junction of the new and the old line several coaches containing workmen were detached and driven by a waiting engine along the new line to the cut. Where the men finally alighted there were rows upon rows of mud huts and a considerable number of small tents. There was a confusing babble of loud voices—overseers giving orders, stone-haulers and trolleymen shouting, and laborers singing in their different tongues. Never had Sindiga seen such bustle and commotion.

A turbaned Indian was put in charge of the party of Abagusii and given instructions to conduct them to their sleeping quarters. Sindiga was among the first dozen new recruits to get located. They were given a large aluminum saucepan, a good-sized water-pot, and a quantity of maize flour. Before they retired for the night a second blanket was given to each of their number. The Indian bade them good night in the Ki-Swahili and they answered in the Ekegusii. Sindiga hunted up some firewood, which was plentiful in the vicinity, and they made their evening meal of maize meal bread. Supper finished, they talked until they were tired; then rolling themselves in their blankets and lying close together for warmth, one by one they dropped off to sleep.

X

THE IRON ROAD

SINDIGA AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE AWAKENED BE-times by the Indian and led out to work. Hoes were given them a little different to those they were accustomed to using on their own corn-fields, and they were told off to do work digging and leveling up the new track. All orders and instructions were given in Ki-Swahili, and it took them some time to comprehend just what was required of them. Moreover, some of them slacked and some were dull, and in a very little while Sindiga demonstrated that he was the best workman of the party.

For several days the same work was given them. Then the least efficient were singled out to carry away soil in baskets for the filling up of a hollow. They commenced work an hour after sunrise, had an hour for their mid-day meal, and usually left off work round about four in the afternoon. In the Kenya Highlands the sun rises at six in the morning and sets at six in the evening with fair regularity all the year round. The workmen, of course, learned Eastern time, and came to call the hour of sunset "twelve o'clock"—back in Gusii they would have called it "women's eyes," from the fact that at that hour the womenfolk are supposed to mistake every stone and tree for some animal lying in wait for them. Often the laborers utilized the last two hours of daylight hunting for herbs to eat with their maize bread. Once a week they were given meat, and occasionally sweet potatoes, but their regular diet was corn, for

morning, noon and night. Many of them ate in the evening only. All of them missed their *wimbi* bread, and none thrived too well on the new diet; yet they helped earn for their tribe a name which the Abagusii hold to this day, for being one of the most industrious tribes in Kenya *under supervision*, and the most adroit shirkers in the world without it!

Sindiga saw several white men, but never learned positively which of them was his chief. Within a month he was taken from the hoeing to quarry stone in a cut a mile away, where he rapidly became an adept at the use of pickaxe and crowbar.

When the day's work was done Sindiga took turns with the others hunting for firewood and greens and fetching water—tasks which in Gusii and everywhere else in Africa are relegated by tribal custom to the women. If free, being unused to sleeping on the floor, he would proceed with the construction of a bed. While the Nilotic Kavirondos' custom is to sleep on the ground, their Bantu neighbors have from the earliest times made for themselves rude bedsteads. Now that beds are fast becoming the universal fashion, they take very good care to boast of this fact.

Two others besides Sindiga made beds. The rest, foreseeing there would not be room for a fourth bed, professed contentment with the mud floor. When, however, the beds were completed and the interlaced lengths of creeper dry and spread with hides for a mattress, these last slept on the beds as often as did the owners themselves.

If ever a company of people had "all things in common" these Gusii laborers did. From three to six slept on one bed at one time. They loaned their goat-skins to each other, together with such remnants of clothing as were given them from time to time by good-natured fellow workmen. Every morsel of food that came their way, from whatever source, they shared.

Sindiga preferred wearing his goat-skin to cotton clothing, but occasionally he went to work attired in a blanket, which he came to wear more frequently as time went on. He disliked seeing natives taking to wearing shirts and shorts like the foreigners, and repeatedly said so. If he was laughed at by his fellows for this conservatism, he was admired for it by the white men. Had he been acquainted with the last fact, it would have nonplussed him completely, for the natives expect Europeans to admire most those who conform to their fashions, and goat-skins were not fashionable with Europeans.

"He is against soft clothing because he hates the foreigners," Sindiga's companions would affirm.

"Let naked Luos go to the white men to learn how to dress," Sindiga would say. "Let the Abagusii be contented to dress as Abagusii!"

Sindiga always went about with his eyes open, with the result that his prejudices against civilization grew. He saw Kikuyu natives dressed like white men, and critically watched their behavior. He saw them put on airs utterly unnatural to them in front of other natives —saw them robbed of all self-respect, fawning upon white men in the hopes of gaining special favors, which —truth to tell—their type seldom got. Mentally he contrasted them with the good-natured, unaffected, but none the less dignified Kikuyus who dressed in skins or blankets, and used pick and shovel with him in the cut.

Sindiga also saw numbers of his own countrymen aping the Kikuyu snobs, strutting around in borrowed clothing with a conceited air that made him sick. What galled him most about their manners was their everlasting pretense at being what they were not. He had swelled out his own chest many a time behind a gaily painted war-shield, but that was different. These men were trying to imitate foreigners, and with exceedingly poor success—Sindiga had taken note of the fact that

the few white men he had seen, besides being quite at ease in their strange garb, never strutted before those less well-dressed than themselves. Clearly, thought he, Africans were not to be improved by the adoption of customs and clothing foreign to their forebears. Convinced that there was no denying this, he set his face against civilization, and preached and sang to his companions adherence to Gusii customs and Gusii morality.

There was another aspect of life on the borders of civilization which aroused in Sindiga's soul a tempest of angry but impotent resentment. This was nothing less devastating morally than the presence of debased native women about the camp, and the licensing of wickedness which, in his savage homeland before the white men came, was punishable with death. Sindiga saw nothing at all revolting about the practice of polygamy, inasmuch as to him it was honorable marriage. A man's wives were bought with cattle, and lawfully bound for life; but he saw very clearly that any sort of "free love" threatened to undermine the foundations of the marriage institution. His whole being rebelled against anything that menaced the morality and traditions of his tribe; and there were other Abagusii who felt the same. Against the destructive vices of the camp, therefore, Sindiga hurled all the eloquence of his passionate nature. He preached morality, and his preaching went home to many.

Few there were among the hundreds at work on that railway who did not boast some kind of religion, or at least a year or two's education at a mission school. Judge then the strangeness of the anomaly: Sindiga, the savage, lifting up his voice for purity among the semi-civilized! To be just, it must be admitted that many a Luo, many a Kikuyu, and the majority of the Abagusii, shared Sindiga's abhorrence of the corruption and depravity around them; but Sindiga, driven by a force

within himself, fought against it more resolutely than all the rest.

As he had been a leader in battle, Nyambati's son now became a leader in the social life of the community, and particularly in its aspirations. In his spare time he constructed a harp, to the twanging of which he sang impromptu songs which were highly appreciated.

Sindiga's skill upon the harp was unequaled, and he had a pair of lungs equal to Nyambati's own. Whenever the Abagusii were gathered together of an evening, his songs were sure to be in demand. Into his humorous descriptions of the white men and their ways, into his songs of war and the chase, and into his praises of the land they had left behind, he wove his fiery hatred of lawbreakers, and his love for Gusii tradition.

The Abagusii practiced a kind of socialism, but no European, hearing Sindiga's song translated, could have imagined them anarchical or revolutionary. They were socialists, but not democrats. Their elders were men of the people, poor like the people, one with the people, but autocratic in their rule. In the olden days no one had dared disobey them. Sindiga extolled their wisdom and reminded his hearers of the good laws which such as Nyambati had helped to frame. Yet he never appeared to be instructing; it might be doubted whether he even realized that he was exercising a powerful influence for good. He merely identified himself with his race, and gave utterance to the highest yearnings they knew; he opened his mouth, and allowed the Spirit which gave him birth to speak through him.

Months passed by, and so redoubtable a champion of morality did Sindiga become that his fame spread throughout the camp. One evening he was visited at his hut by a deputation of Kikuyu Christians. They were anxious to hear this fiery Omogusii tell something of himself and the tribe to which he belonged. Like himself they were laborers on the railway. They had ac-

cepted the Christian faith prior to contracting for work, as a result of instruction at an isolated mission station in their reserve.

They had dressed up for the occasion of their visit, but they found Sindiga attired simply in a worn red blanket. An old cow-hide covered his bed, which he dusted carefully with a corner of his blanket before bidding his visitors be seated. Some of the Abagusii who were present sniffed their disapproval of the odor of cotton shirts, but were careful not to do this too audibly.

Having greeted the Kikuyus in their own tongue, Nyambati's son placed "bread" and greens before them, which they, whether hungry or not, were much too polite to refuse.

Besides having mastered crude Ki-Swahili, the linguafranca of East Africa, Sindiga had picked up not a little of the Kikuyu tongue. In conversation, however, he preferred to employ the Ki-Swahili, to the use of which he reverted as soon as greetings were over.

The Christians made intelligent inquiries concerning the Gusii tribe, showing themselves interested in learning where their country lay. Sindiga could only tell them that it lay in the direction of the sun's setting, beyond the last station on the white man's railway, and beyond "the sea." Then the Christians told him what they knew of the greater sea to the east, and of the lands they had heard tell of beyond it. Very soon they were engrossed in friendly conversation.

There was one topic which Sindiga, throughout the evening, took special pains to avoid. That topic was religion. He regarded these Christians as ambassadors of the white man's civilization, against which, as a loyal-hearted Omogusii, he had declared war.

Similarly, he regarded every white official, every white farmer and labor-recruiter, as a representative of the Christian religion.

Sindiga did not differentiate between civilization and Christianity.—How could he? As far as he knew, all white men married but one wife, and all white men loved money! Many of them regarded money as preferable to children—a choice unholy, unthinkable to Kaffirs. Then, too, there were good worldlings and bad Christians in Africa; Gentiles doing by nature the things "contained in the law," and men professing the Faith of Jesus who kept not the Commandments of God. How could this young savage make distinction between civilization exalted and Christianity degraded? Either meant to him no more and no less than the white man's *dasturi* (custom), and all white men were alike to him. Similarly, natives who became civilized and natives who embraced Christianity were by Sindiga placed in one category as rebels to tradition and troublers of mankind.

As he listened to the Kikuyus who had become Christians, he thought that they were the best samples of the new "cult" he had ever met. Sensing their sincerity, he steered clear of controversial subjects; and in consequence of this policy, he formed some grievous misconceptions of their beliefs and practices.

The Christians were less cautious, for they conceived themselves as having a Message for all savages. They believed, moreover, in a Power behind their message, and would fain have seen this earnest young pagan rejoicing in a knowledge of God. For his part, Sindiga believed them to be wholly deluded and astray. He divined that Christians were spirit-worshipers like themselves, but that they no longer respected their native elders, and that their one supreme ambition was to learn the ways of the foreigners.

Supper having been disposed of, in response to urgent requests Sindiga sang a song in his own tongue, accompanying it with the harp. Then his visitors, of their own accord, sang some of the gospel hymns they knew.

Although the words were unintelligible to Sindiga, he expressed appreciation of the tunes. When at a late hour that night the Christians took their departure, it was with the warmest expressions of mutual goodwill. They had conceived a real liking for their genial host; and Sindiga was neither blind to his visitors' good traits nor unappreciative of their genuine interest in him and his tribe. He both liked them and was sorry for them —sorry to see them so zealous in what seemed to him an evil cause. But in the course of the evening his hatred of missions had grown prodigiously.

When the work in the cut was finished, Sindiga joined a gang who were rail-laying. His own work at first consisted merely of carrying keys, fishplates, bolts, and nuts for an Indian; but soon he was able himself to engage in the fastening together and tightening up of the rails. A gang of men went ahead laying down ties at regular intervals, and another gang followed who placed the rails in position. Nyambati's son helped to fix the rails and link up one with another. Other workmen followed after him, filling in earth under the ties to make them rigid. These ties were all of steel, no timber having proved invulnerable to the attacks of white ants; Sindiga used to wonder by what magic the white man had created such weighty iron bars.

He enjoyed his work and experienced no attacks of homesickness, a common enough complaint among natives away from the land of their birth. He gloried in tasks that required a maximum output of strength, but was keenly alive to the pleasures of work which required calculation and foresight. At hoeing and some other mechanical tasks he was as apt as any other Omogusii to lose interest.

By this time he had dismissed from his mind all thoughts of the girl with the black eyes. She had filled his thoughts as long as there had seemed a chance of winning her father over; but when his cattle died, Sin-

diga had purposely forgotten her. The heroic love that goes on loving "when hope is dead" is unknown in Gusii—perhaps because the girls themselves lack sentiment. Certain it is that they would fail to appreciate the sort of devotion which manifests itself in love-sickness. So Sindiga forgot all about Zakawa's daughter (which was easier to do with the distractions of life "up the line"), studied the languages of the other workmen, and enjoyed his work.

He was so thoroughly satisfied with the life that he contracted for a second year. Had his mother been alive, he told himself, twelve months away from Gusii would have satisfied him. Mothers were greatly to be desired: they had big hearts, and were full of understanding. He still lamented the fact that he knew nothing of the circumstances of Keruo's death; it had always weighed heavily upon his mind. Sometimes, out of his ignorance, he would fashion foolish theories (he knew them to be foolish!) that maybe she was still alive somewhere in Lumbwa. But then he would recall the possibility that Keruo had never been any relation of his, nor he any relation of Nyambati's. He always groaned in spirit at this thought. If only he knew the truth! As well might he wish for Nyambati's return from the land of the dead! Alas! he was fatherless and motherless, and as well off up the line as anywhere.

The second year and a third fled rapidly by, and when he was asked at the end of the third year to stay on at a higher rate of wage he readily agreed.

Missions meanwhile had started operations and were extending their influence in Gusii; and Barongo, never forgetful of the fact that his friend had defended the white men, was becoming more than casually interested in their activities.

Other Abagusii came up the line to work, bringing with them news, first of Sindiga's relatives and later of Barongo himself. The first big piece of news Sindiga

received was that his sister had run away from Nyanguka, on the grounds that he had failed to pay over the extra two cattle which determined her worth. Sindiga felt sorry for them both, but considered the husband guilty of "breach of promise." Had he not promised five cows in all and paid over only a paltry three? He surmised that his foster-mother, Kinanga, to whom the cows would naturally be paid in his absence, had been instrumental in persuading Nyakiage to abscond.

After this came word that a mission had been started on Nyanchwa Hill, overlooking the old fighting ground of Nyamosaka where the Government had its headquarters. But the news which came with the greatest possible shock of surprise to Sindiga was that Barongo himself was consorting with a student from the Mission School—Barongo, the once loyal-hearted Omogusii, who had warned him to beware of white men! It staggered belief!

Now, at last, Sindiga's thoughts began to turn homewards. He began to long for the green hills of Gusii, for sight of the great cliff of Kitutu and the kraals of Kanyimbo, and for reunion with his friend; but for some months he worked on.

The new line was nearing completion. Where the country was quite level and unforested they had made progress at the rate of a thousand or more yards per day. They met with European settlements all along the route, and Sindiga had ample opportunity of observing white men and their ways. The Europeans he saw most frequently were farmers, traders, and labor-recruiters. He was greatly impressed by their homes, their motor vehicles, guns, and labor-saving devices; yet he never came to regard them as his superiors. Fortune had favored them—that was all. He feared them, and respected them for their blunt justice and their ready humor; he was even prepared to believe them friendly

in their intentions, while he hated their civilization. The only Europeans he actually disliked were the missionaries, for they alone sought to interfere with, and overthrow, ancient tradition. He was sure they employed witchcraft to ensnare the simple; else how otherwise could his friend Barongo have been beguiled?

There was one strange thing about the white men which Sindiga was constrained instinctively to admire, and that was their chivalry ("compassion" he would have called it) towards women. He saw white women walk out with their husbands, ride horseback with them, eat with them beside their tents, play games with them, talk and laugh with them, as though in every way their equal. It greatly puzzled him, for he had never seen or heard the like of it. He was amused at the way the white women walked, and was inclined to wonder whether or not they could possibly run in their outlandish footgear. But most of all he wondered how it was that they never needed beating! Native cooks and house-boys assured him that white women never needed beating, every bit as positively as married men in Gusii had declared *their* wives unmanageable without it. The only conclusion Sindiga could come to was that white women doubtless "behaved themselves" much better than the women of his tribe.

He was returning home from work one evening along the newly-laid railway track when, silhouetted against the setting sun, he saw a native woman struggling to free herself from the rough grasp of a black man twice her size. Sindiga had often seen men ill-treat their wives, nor had he ever dreamt of interfering: they knew their own business best. Strangely enough, on this particular occasion, he felt differently; he felt angry with the man. When he realized that an inexplicable indignation was laying hold of him, he grew alarmed; he wondered if he too had been bewitched by the white men, and was himself actually growing chivalrous!

Quite unconsciously he accelerated his steps; but he said to himself as he went along: "What! Cannot a man do as he likes with his own? Who knows but that they are man and wife? If a man kills his woman, is it not his own loss? Who am I to interfere?"—But even as he reflected thus, his teeth and his fists were clenched.

"I'll just wish him good evening," he told himself, "and perhaps ask him what the trouble is."

He was still a considerable way off when he saw the woman knocked down by a savage blow. Her persecutor stood over her for a moment, and then, observing the manner of Sindiga's approach, strode rapidly away, leaving the woman lying motionless across the track.

Sindiga slowed up. His sense of having nearly overstepped the bounds of propriety was too great to allow of his following the ruffian. Instead he simply continued his walk along the railway track till he came to where the woman lay. Her head had struck the rail and she was unconscious—if not dead. She wore a bright cotton cloth wrapped tightly round her body Nubian style, and her skin was a dark brown, something like Sindiga's own.

She lay face downwards across the track and never moved. Sindiga crouched down and hesitatingly felt for signs of life. Then suddenly, even as he realized that she lived, he recoiled. He faltered in his half-made resolve to assist her home.

Here was a woman whose notoriety had been blazoned abroad on the lips of all the men in the camp. More than any of her kind this woman had laid herself out to ensnare the simple and corrupt the good. More than one young Omogusii, forgetting or ignoring the traditional morality of his tribe, had consorted with this unscrupulous wanderer. She was an enemy of his race, and consequently, Sindiga reflected, his enemy.

When the first railway was in the process of construction, man-eating lions had prowled around the

camps. Night after night they had carried their terrified victims off into the thorn bush, to devour them greedily and return for more.—The figure lying so still at Sindiga's feet in the growing darkness represented a more modern, and a worse menace to Abagusii who left their homes to go to work for the white men.

While Sindiga hesitated as to what he should do, the short African twilight gave place to night. A light twinkled in the distance, and Sindiga heard the sound of an engine rattling down a steep grade. It was the train bringing supplies, which should have arrived earlier that afternoon.

Sindiga stood still, listening. It drew nearer, and the faint thunder of its approach sounded terrible in his ears.—He stepped back off the track and stood with folded arms.

The woman, who was his enemy, and the enemy of his race, never moved. Louder and louder swelled the challenge of the approaching train, and still Sindiga stood, motionless and watchful. He stood as he would have stood had the white men been punishing Lumbwas for raiding the Abagusii. The savage in him was uppermost, clamoring for the death of his enemy. Was she not the product of the white man's civilization, which forbade the righteous practice of polygamy? And was it not meet that this iron monster of the white man's invention should end her miserable existence?

The faint thunder of the locomotive's approach grew into an ominous roar. Sindiga could now see the illuminated smoke, and the light of the flying sparks. He exulted.

—Was it the influence of some unseen heavenly Spirit, the spirit of some more kindly ancestor, or some powerful, but inconsistent, trait in himself which wrought the miracle? Of a sudden there swept through him a great revulsion to standing by and permitting so dire a punishment to overtake the woman—a revulsion

similar to that which had made him spare the Lumbwa on Nyamosaka Hill years before. With one stride he was standing over her and lifting her in his strong arms. He sprang with her from the track. A moment later, behind him, the terror of the night crashed by, shaking the ground with its weight of cargo.

Sindiga had now to decide what he was going to do with the helpless burden in his arms. He reflected for a moment. It was no small problem, but Sindiga was equal to it.

"The white man—he will take care of her," he decided.

The savage knew that pitying mercy was one of the attributes of the foreigners. Their hearts were good, even if their wisdom was foolishness. The thought brought with it a profound sense of relief.

In the dark Nyambati's son groped his way to the tent of one of the white men. There he placed his burden down and listened.

The occupant was asleep on a low canvas bed. Sindiga warily inserted a long arm, and grasping a leg of the bed, gave it a sharp jerk. The white man was out of bed in a moment. Sindiga, as he backed away, heard him unfasten the fly of the tent; saw him bring out a lantern, and heard his ejaculation upon finding the woman.

Her savior made a low sound expressive of complete satisfaction, and thoughtfully bent his steps in the direction of his own quarters. Of the white man's goodness and medical skill he had no doubt.

Shortly after this incident Sindiga was taken with a fever, and was forced to quit work for a couple of weeks. It was no uncommon thing for Gusii laborers to contract sickness when away from their native hills for any length of time. This was the first attack Sindiga had had, and a fairly severe one. He went into hospital and his pay was stopped, but he received the usual ra-

tions together with quinine treatment, and on the sixth day he rallied.

During his convalescence he continued to reflect a good deal on the white man's mode of living and ruling. He became more and more convinced that the spread of civilization was inimical to Gusii interests and welfare. Civilization would stamp out the traditions of the elders. His tribe would lose its isolation, and from distaste for commerce would lose out in a competitive world. Moreover, their freedom would be curtailed.

A logical instinct rather than any profound mental process helped Sindiga to arrive at these not altogether erroneous conclusions. The longing to see Barongo and his native land grew upon him. Finally he became homesick, and formed a resolution to ask for leave to return to Gusii immediately upon his release from hospital. Then one day a native entered the ward inquiring for him by name. In his hand he bore a missive, such as Sindiga had often seen go to white men and educated Kikuyus. Sindiga refused it at first saying, without shame, that he could not read. The man insisted that the letter was "his property," and pointing to the inscription on the envelope spelled out—"S-I-N-D-I-G-A, the son of Nyambati."

"Is that what is written there?" asked Sindiga.

"Certainly. Can't you see?" replied the man.

"Yes, certainly I can see," assented the patient then, and took the letter.

He tore the envelope open as he had seen the foreigners do, and studied the letter within. It was decorated with blots and flourishes, and withal seemed to the savage a remarkable piece of penmanship; but not a word of it could he read.

It so happened that one of the Kikuyu Christians came in while he was examining the characters. He had come to inquire after a brother who was sick, and was surprised to see Sindiga. He gave a curious glance

at the letter he held in his hand, and asked, "Can you read them?"

Again, without shame, Sindiga answered that he could not.—"You read it," he said, and put the missive into the Kikuyu's hand.

Thus commanded, the visitor sat down on the bed, and glanced over the letter to see if it was written in a language he understood.

"Who is it from, can you tell?" Sindiga asked.

"Yes," the Christian answered. "It is signed: 'Barongo, the son of Kibagendi.' "

—For the first time in his life Sindiga wished that he could read. That he should have had to depend on a Christian to read *that* letter galled him horribly, for well he knew its purport. Barongo, his lifelong friend, had forsaken the traditions of his race, and was in all probability a student at the mission. The whirlwind had taken him; and this Kikuyu would secretly rejoice at the evidence the letter contained of the spread of Christianity.

Doubtless Barongo had written the letter himself. There was the danger of the religion of Christ, that it broke down all prejudices, and left its converts agreeable to learning all the cunning of the foreigners.—Thus reflected Nyambati's son, pride of the Kitutus of Kanyimbo, as he lay back and watched the Kikuyu Christian fingering his friend's epistle. With a not very good grace, he bade him reveal speedily all that the letter contained.

It turned out to be exactly as he had feared. Barongo had reached the parting of the ways, and had made his choice. He had decided to follow the Man Christ, and was urging Sindiga to do the same; for this Christ, he said, "was the Son of God, and the Light of the world, and God the Father was not only the Creator of man, but his loving Friend and Saviour."

The Christian handed him back the letter. "You are sorry?" he questioned, with evident sympathy.

"Yes, I am full of sorrow," Sindiga made reply. "Barongo, my best friend, has joined the outcasts; he has fallen into a trap; he is lost!"

In vain the Kikuyu protested, reminding Sindiga that his friend was still a loyal Omogusii.

"No, no!" Sindiga exclaimed, giving vent to forceful expressions of grief. "Alas! Alas! He has gone over to the white men."—Even thus had Barongo bewailed what he had chosen to regard as Sindiga's defection when first he had turned his face towards the railway! But he who was known as Nyambati's son had proven more faithful to Gusii tradition than the son of Kibagendi.

When Sindiga made up his mind to do a thing, he did it. He had resolved to return to his native land, and the prospect of finding Barongo changed for the worse did not turn him from his purpose. He would learn the worst for himself.

As soon as he was well he made known his intentions of returning to the Gusii reserve. There were few, if any, of that heterogeneous community who did not regret Sindiga's leaving them. As a matter of fact, he himself found it hard to sever some of the ties binding him to the novel life he had enjoyed for more than three full years. He had lived simply and now possessed wealth sufficient for the purchase of several cattle. He had learned to speak two languages with fair fluency, and a smattering of other languages, including the Lumbwa tongue and Dho-Luo. In Ki-Swahili, to which his own language bore not a few resemblances, he had become really proficient.

Like all other Abagusii, Sindiga was immensely proud of his "mother tongue." He sincerely believed that it was by far the easiest language on the face of the earth to learn—this in spite of its guttural g's, nasal n's, and words which tapered off with strings of liquid-sounding

r's! In common with his generation he eschewed all Gusii words that bore any resemblance to the Ki-Swahili. The young men generally, not excepting Sindiga, nevertheless borrowed considerably from the Luo tongue and the English, and often puzzled the old men with words of their own invention. Thus their speech was continually changing.

The Abagusii, of course, have no idea of the growth of languages. "Every bird sings its own name," say they, and marvel that their feathered friends should be so wise!

Perhaps there never was a son of Manga more proud of his vernacular than young Sindiga. As he tied his blankets in a bundle, and swung off along the track with it balanced on his head, he rejoiced that soon he would be hearing its music alone. The very thought intoxicated him, and he sang his felicity to the blue heavens. On account of the absence of cloud, *he* would have called them "black," blue, and other common colors, having no place in the Ekegusii.

As he went along Sindiga continued to sing. A warm wind fanned his cheeks and the fathomless blue ether yawned above him. Gorgeous butterflies flitted across his pathway, and beautiful birds caroled, chasing their mates through the branches of trees bright with yellow and red blossom.

Unconscious of the effect which all these things had upon his spirits, without even a word for "beauty" in his language, the savage was none the less a child of nature, a true son of the "Great One"—and he knew it not.

XI

THE GUSII HILLS

OTHER WORKMEN BESIDES SINDIGA WERE RETURNing to their reserves, but Nyambati's son was the first to set out. Two or three miles down the track waited the supply train by which they were to travel as far as the nearest station on the main line. When Sindiga saw it in the distance he shouted—partly because his human spirit challenged as a matter of course everything that provoked fear, and partly because he welcomed the sight of the iron monster that was to take him back to his homeland, to Barongo his friend, and to the Great Cliff of Kanyimbo.

At last the prospective passengers were all lined up in front of the train. Sindiga and a number of others fell to arguing as to the time it would take them to learn to drive an engine. A Swahili from the coast was placed in charge of those natives whose reserves lay to the east—a very worldly-wise Swahili, who talked affectedly down his nose and looked down on all Kavirondos as the very "scum of the earth." A Luo this time was put in charge of Sindiga's party—that is, of all who were traveling westward. There were a great many Utendis, a tribe closely related to the Abagusii, but only two of Sindiga's fellow countrymen.

The Luo was an interesting specimen of humanity, but too well-informed concerning the darker side of civilization to be altogether likable. He stood in considerable awe of the Swahili, but did his best not to show it. His attire consisted of a pair of ragged cotton

pants, a scarlet and white shirt, shoes, and sun-glasses. From the fact that he carried a New Testament ostentatiously in one hand, Sindiga presumed that he was a Christian. He gave himself out to be such in fact; but in reality he was no more than a hanger-on at missions. He had lived all his life in careless freedom. Money earned by labor-recruiting for Europeans, and trading, had made him fairly independent, so that neither the traditions of his tribe nor missions—with their insistence on the benefits to be derived from manual labor—had much influence over him. Every step he took in the direction of civilization was leading him further and further away from the religion of Jesus Christ. Sindiga watched him, listened to his conversation, and became more prejudiced than ever against missions.

The names of the returning workmen having been called, there was a rush to board the train. Meanwhile the Luo issued commands in a peremptory tone of voice, opened and shut carriage doors, and tried to impress everybody in general with a sense of his importance. Times out of number Sindiga had seen half-educated Abagusii act in exactly the same way.

—There was another rush and more excited commands when they all disembarked at the junction. The intelligence soon passed round from lip to lip that the Kisumu train was due in. A billow of smoke above the thorn trees, a shrill whistle, a sound like distant thunder developing speedily into a roar, and the iron monster on wheels hove into sight. The minute it came to a standstill the natives on the platform began to jostle each other again, and to scramble excitedly for the swinging doors.

With difficulty the Luo kept his men together and saw them safely aboard. Fifteen to twenty of the workmen were crowded in a compartment, wherever they could find standing room. Europeans and Asiatics in

their respective coaches traveled with greater comfort in the fore-section of the train.

The Luo had much to say concerning the arrogance of the white men in allocating to themselves the best compartments. He expressed himself, as a matter of fact, quite decidedly on this point. While Sindiga gazed intently out of the window, across the plains dotted with zebra, wildebeest, buffalo, deer and ostriches, the Luo made speeches abusive of the men who had built and owned the railway.

Somehow, in spite of the fact that others in the compartment were loudly applauding the man's oratory, Sindiga was moved to keep silent. The white man's money was wrapped up in his blankets, and the white man's train was carrying him where he wanted to go. Though he had his own grudges against the white men, he had a logical mind and could not help resenting the other's unjust and untimely vituperations.

With no other complaint than that the white men had better compartments, better houses, and better farms than the natives, the Luo continued to inveigh against the foreigners with ever rising eloquence.

Sindiga merely listened, but his patience became exhausted at last, and once more he found himself defending the men whose religion, and whose habits of thought, he hated.

"Ee-yah!" he exclaimed, with all the contempt an Omogusii can get into that expression. "Don't the white men pay for all the luxuries they enjoy, and aren't native fares reduced?"—He said this in better Swahili than the would-be imitator of Swahilis and English could muster for a reply.

"Where do they get all their money from anyway?" spluttered the orator. "Do they not all live on the taxes we have to pay?"

"I do not think so," Sindiga answered. "Look you. To preserve peace in Africa the white men employ sol-

diers, and soldiers require pay. Many porters and workmen are employed on the railways, who also need pay. I have heard that it is the white man's ships that bring you the soft clothing you buy from the Indians; and sailors must live as well as livers on land. Then I have heard that when you black Christians write letters, it is the white men who see to their dispatch—and the postmen need pay. The white men say that it costs a great deal of money to build ships and railway trains, and govern a country. When they say this I believe they are speaking the truth."

"True enough," one of the two Abagusii at Sindiga's elbow averred; "and it's fair that we should pay our share. However, since we pay tax there is really no reason why we should not have as decent compartments to travel in as the white men."

Sindiga laughed—a merry, contagious laugh that verily seemed to clear the atmosphere. He appreciated the point, but would not allow it to turn him from his argument.

"You would look fine on one of those cushioned seats, brother," he said, "with mud all over your legs and grease on your cow-hide!"

There was a general laugh at this, which set the natives in an adjoining compartment laughing from sheer appreciation of a laugh.

"If I went in one of those compartments I should, of course, dress like a European," retorted the Omogusii, laughing himself at the idea but all undaunted.

This was regarded as a pretty fair rejoinder by all present, and the Luo continued his interrupted oration.

"We are treated like dogs!" he declared. "I know all about it. I worked in Nairobi for six months and learned a good deal there. I learned a lot that none of you know anything about. I tell you, we are downtrodden and despised!"

Just where the young man learned all this he did not

say. . . . Sindiga put his head out of the window again. If it were really true that he and his tribe were the subjects of tyranny, it seemed to him that their own chiefs were responsible for it. Invested with authority greater than was ever given to individuals in Nyambati's day, they frequently allowed justice to miscarry for their personal gain. But Sindiga would never have thought of laying the blame for this on any system of Government or religion; it was merely a regrettable characteristic of human nature.

These chiefs were elected by the native elders but paid by the Government. According to their feudal estate they were called *nyaparas*, headmen, or chiefs. The chiefs were responsible to a Paramount Chief who, with his associate rulers, was himself responsible to the District Commissioner, representing the Crown. If a wrong was not righted by the native authority, the injured party, upon the payment of a stipulated fee, had the right of appeal to the commissioner, or European magistrate. The frequency of these appeals, costly as they often proved, would indicate that the white man's justice was held in higher esteem than that of the native rulers. Sindiga, at any rate, did not accuse the Government of misrule, much as he hated civilization. He gazed admiringly across the white man's farms, experiencing never a twinge of jealousy; rather he wondered why his own tribe had never cultivated land in the same way. He marveled at the homes of the foreigners, but did not covet a similar kind of house for himself. The chief of his clan owned a splendid spring bed, but he kept it piled up with junk, and always slept on a native bed no better than Sindiga's own. Similarly Sindiga would have preferred Nyambati's old kraal to the most perfect of modern villas—would have preferred any compact mud hut, with a thatched roof and a low doorway, to a suite of rooms in a mansion! Therefore he saw no point at all in the Luo's arguments, and doubted

in his heart whether that gentleman himself really coveted the things he cried out after.

By this time they were nearing the Victoria Nyanza. Sindiga, with his head out of the window, observed that the grass on the Lumbwa Hills was parched and dry from lack of rain. Drier still and dusty were the plains of Luoland. Far away on the southern horizon he recognized the Gusii Hills. It was raining there; the heaped up clouds were crowned with light, and the very rain was golden! Suddenly he forgot the crowd in the compartment, the rushing train, and the white men who built railroads. He leaned farther out of the window, and breathed deeply. While his eyes scanned the far-off horizon, his spirit was already roaming his native hills. He began to recall how he and his half-brother, Mosoti, with Nyakiage, Nyamwita, and many others used to go honey hunting up under the face of the Great Cliff; recalled many a good game of "hockey" and many an exciting deer hunt; recalled the old tribal wars, exploits with Barongo and Machuki, and the great fight which had been Nyambati's last. And presently he fell to wondering how his half-sister and her family were faring, and speculated as to what Ondieki might be doing. Thoughts even of a maiden with black eyes and lips almost as red as a European's came to him—but these last occasioned in him nothing like their old-time thrill.

Finally Kisumu and the Kavirondo Gulf came into sight. The train was commencing to slow up when Sindiga heard a voice raised, in the adjoining compartment, as if in conclusion of a heated argument.

"We shall see," the voice declared. "Her father has agreed to my cattle, and so the girl is my property, whether she likes it or not!"

A wave of indignation swept over Sindiga, for the voice that uttered this challenge had spoken in his own tongue. So vehemently had Sindiga been accustomed to

denouncing the acquisitiveness of the white men, that a father's selling his daughter against her will, just for greed of cattle, suddenly struck him as despicable. He doubted much if such a thing ever had happened in the olden days, when barter was rather a matter of mutual convenience than of one-sided gain. Such wickedness as this, nevertheless, could not be laid at the white man's door, for it arose directly out of their own inexorable marriage laws. Yet, he asked himself, how could marriage be stabilized without the handing over of cattle? When a man took to himself a wife, the lawfulness of the union was apparent only as the cattle transaction took place. The possibility of unscrupulous parents committing their daughters grievous wrong, by forcing them to marry against their will, had never before occurred to him. As a matter of fact, he had never conceived of a girl's having any serious, insurmountable objection to her parents' choice of a husband. This was quite a new problem to ponder over.

. . . Christian ideas were spreading in Africa even where the Christian religion was scoffed at; and Sindiga, honest savage though he was, had no two minds about the coercing of girls into marriage being a monstrous evil. Surely, thought he, but few would act so ungraciously towards their own offspring. He had not finished puzzling over the matter when the train came to a standstill.

The passengers poured out of the coaches like bees out of a hive. Sindiga watched to see who alighted from the compartment next to theirs, for the voice had sounded strangely familiar. To his surprise he recognized Ondieki himself. He stepped down onto the platform with the air of a self-made man, justly proud of his achievements. His dress consisted of a suit of gray flannel, a very white helmet, brown shoes, and a brilliant red necktie, and he carried a cane in one hand. Nyambati's son was dressed in his blanket and a belt.

Had he been wearing merely a goat-skin, Ondieki could not have held his nose any higher than he did.

Sindiga watched him swagger away down the platform with mingled feelings of dislike and amusement. From the finery Ondieki wore, he concluded that his old enemy was now a Christian of some considerable importance.

The Luo, who had seen Sindiga and his fellow passengers onto the train, now secured tickets for their passage across the Gulf. He too was glad to be nearing home.

When they boarded the tiny sailboat that night, one and all were in high spirits. They spent the night on the water, and more than half of it conversing gaily and singing songs. The majority of the passengers were Luos; there were no other Abagusii aboard than the two previously mentioned as being on the train with Sindiga. Ondieki did not cross with them, but he was known to most of the passengers. Sindiga gathered that he had made a lot of money buying fowl in South Kavirondo and selling them at a profit in Kisumu; also that he traded in cattle and hides.

The sailboat cast anchor at the little rock pier just after dawn, and the natives lost no time in jumping ashore. The three Abagusii especially were glad to feel their feet on solid earth again. Nothing would satisfy the Luo who had brought them safely thus far on their journey but that they should shake hands all round before parting. This, since the advent of the Europeans, had become quite a popular mode of expressing goodwill. Sometimes it was varied by a more or less military salute borrowed from the King's African Rifle Corps. Old men will often greet a white man by waving one arm energetically in his direction, and crying: "Salute! Salute, *bwana*!" The Luo began by shaking hands with each of the Abagusii in turn, prolonging each handshake fully a minute while vociferating his good wishes.

He ended up with a grand variety of salutes, accompanied by the most forceful expressions of goodwill he could think of. The Abagusii, not to be outdone in politeness, returned with equal energy the handshakes, the salutes, and the good wishes.

Finally they parted, the Luo concluding with a really sincere "God keep you!" . . . He was only a hanger-on at missions, but not such a bad fellow after all.

The three Abagusii belonged to different clans, but for some thirty miles their ways lay in the same direction. They set off at a run. When they looked back their Luo friends were still shaking hands with unabated vigor!

Sindiga parted from his two companions on Bigendi Hill, now a part of the township where the Government for South Kavirondo had its headquarters. Avoiding the mission where his friend had gone to live, Sindiga slept that night at the hut of a Kikuyu policeman with whom he had become slightly acquainted prior to his sojourn up the line. He shrank from meeting Barongo, now that that meeting was possible, lest he should discover the existence of a gulf between them, because of the change in his friend.

The next morning early he set out for Nyambati's kraal which he found, as he had expected to find it, in ruins. One of the huts was still standing—the one he had last occupied and which had been built by his brother Mosoti. Half the thatch was gone, and the plaster was falling from the walls.

A flood of memories came back to Sindiga, and he wept. Breaking into wild lamentations for the dead, he turned towards Manga, the Great Cliff, and singing his desolation commenced to climb. The steeper the ascent, the faster he climbed and the louder he sang, for it seemed as though the spirits of his ancestors were pursuing him.

He stood for a moment on the summit to note the

changes that had taken place in his absence. Then, craving immediate sight of kindred, he headed for Nyanguka's kraal. To his keen disappointment he found a new kraal there, inhabited by strangers. He inquired for his sister, but they could tell him no more than that she had left the locality with her husband more than a year before, and was living in the neighborhood of some falls on the Kuja River. They pressed him to stay for a day or two and partake of their hospitality, but he would accept no more than a gourdful of thin porridge.

Towards sunset he arrived at his uncle's kraal, and straightway inquired for Kinanga, his foster-mother; but she who had mothered him after the disappearance of Keruo had gone the way of Nyambati. Sorrowfully his uncle's other wives told how the plague had taken her, and how on the second day of her sickness she had died. There had been a great deal of sickness, they said. Only a few days before the plague seized Kinanga, she had attended the funeral of old Muraa—Sindiga's grandmother. His grandfather had gone first: Muraa had survived him a few weeks only; then she too had sickened, and died calling for her daughter Keruo. His grandfather's other wives had found other husbands.

This was a very different home-coming to what Sindiga had hoped for. His old uncle had been drinking heavily since Kinanga's death, and was too drunk to converse with him that evening; but on the morrow he told with unmitigated disgust how the white doctor had insisted upon inoculating him and his wives and children, and had moreover ordered the burning of the hut in which Kinanga had died. The old man was willing to believe what the *dakitari* had said about rats and fleas spreading the plague, but he profoundly objected to inoculation. He had heard that the fluid injected was the blood of Kikuyus whom the white men waylaid at night and slew. Someone, he said, had ac-

tually seen the white man kill a sick Luo by holding a cloth over his face, and had watched while the doctor drew his blood. His eldest boy, moreover, had looked in at the dispensary, and had seen bottles of red liquid standing together on a shelf which could have been nothing else but human blood!

To all this Sindiga listened aghast, with a growing determination never to allow himself to be inoculated, whoever else might be willing to submit to it.

Nyanguka, he now learned, had become rich in cattle through the death of relatives, and had paid over to Kinanga before her death the part of the marriage dowry which had been owing for so many years. Nyakiage had become reconciled to her husband at once, and they had gone to live in the Boguche country. By parentage Nyanguka had belonged to this clan, though born a Kitutu. Sindiga decided to build himself first a house and make himself "independent," and then hunt up the pair.

One of his uncle's wives' huts was vacated for him, and he was invited to make it his permanent abode if he so chose. He commenced right away, however, to cut sticks for a dwelling place of his own. His cousins lent willing assistance, as did also a number of neighbors; and while Sindiga got together material for the walls, they busied themselves, between hoeing operations, in pulling grasses and tying them in bundles ready for thatching.

It was several days before Sindiga could bring himself to visit Barongo at the mission; and when at last he summoned the necessary resolution and set out for Nyanchwa Hill, it was not without dire misgivings as to the kind of interview they would have.

On the main road he passed a crowd of young boys pushing a white man on a bicycle up a steep hill. None of them wore clothing of any sort, but round their waists each wore a string, on which were threaded a few coins,

such as were becoming the common medium of exchange everywhere in place of goats and sheep. As the boys perspired and pushed, they shouted the old Gusii battle cry: "Don't think!" Whenever one of their number flagged, the rest would shout "Don't think—just push!"

"See them!" called an old man to Sindiga, from his sweet potato patch by the side of the road. "They would sooner earn cents these days than help us old folk on our gardens! Alas, for the good old days that are no more!"

"Don't they do any work on the land then, father?" Sindiga asked.

"Yes," the old man made reply; by which he meant, Sindiga was right—they did *not* work on the land any more. This was the Gusii way of agreeing with the implication in a negative question.

The old man proceeded to qualify his assent with: "A few of them do, you know, but most of them prefer making money to planting potatoes. Their fathers are just as bad. They are all set on piling up the rupees. Some of them do nothing else from one year's end to another but trade cattle. It's folly, but the white men have turned the world upside down. We tell them rupees won't buy food if there's none planted, but they won't heed us. The rising generation think they know more than their elders. There is not much respect for parents in Gusii any more. Mind you—I am saying nothing against my own. My eldest is at the mission, but he is better than a good many. He comes home at sowing time and at harvest and gives me a helping hand. He says that's what 'Christianity' means. I don't know anything about religion, but Machuki is a good lad even if he does go to the mission. I'll stick to that. Coveting knowledge, my son, does not hurt a man like coveting rupees."

Sindiga's interest in the old man grew when he heard

him mention Machuki, for in peace and in war he had shared many adventures with a young man of that name.

"Machuki is your son?" he inquired. . . . The old man nodded.

"Then you must be old Nyarango—and I am Nyambati's son."

"Sindiga!" exclaimed the old man with evident pleasure.

"The same," replied the one-time warrior of Kanyimbo. "And I was greatly interested in what you were saying just now about Machuki. Don't you feel bad about his going to the mission?"

"I did at first, and his mother will never get over it. She weeps whenever she thinks about it, for she believes the foreigners will spirit him away one day and drop him into the sea."

"But you yourself, Nyarango—are you not opposed to missions?"

"I don't know. It is impossible to say what the food will be like until it is cooked. It depends on whether or not missions improve the country. It looks as though the white men have come to stay; so have Swahilis, and Nubians, and Luos, and Baganda. As far as I can see there are good and bad among them all, as well as among our own people. Our sons are hungry for knowledge we old folk cannot give them, and if they cannot get it at the mission they will get it from whoever will give it."

Sindiga put in a query about what the old man thought of Christians generally.

"The Christians? Well, I'm not against the Christians myself. It is the money-lovers I dislike—the black traders who despise gardening; who dress like mission converts but pay no heed to their Bibles. Machuki reads me the Bible sometimes, and it's sound doctrine. But these traders—they get a little money and begin to look

down on everybody else as though they were white men. I hate to see the very children coveting the white man's silver."

Sindiga felt as though he could have listened to the old man all day without wearying. When at length he resumed his journey, hope had quickened within him that maybe Barongo would not be so greatly changed after all.

He had donned his newest blanket for the occasion of his visit to the mission—the one he had received as a parting gift from the white man who had "signed off" his *kipandi*. Much as he preferred his goat-skin for ordinary wear, as being cooler and a proof of his faithfulness to Gusii custom, goat-skins were really fast going out of fashion, and he believed in the spirit of the saying: "One must do in Rome as Rome does." Mission adherents had entirely given up the wearing of goat-skins. Since he was visiting "civilization" he thought he would appear as civilized as possible for his friend's sake.

He found Nyanchwa Hill greatly changed. A large mission village had sprung up just below the spot whence—years before—Sindiga had driven his grandmother's cows, and Barongo had been held captive by the Nyaribaris. Here in the village Sindiga found Kitutus and Nyaribaris living side by side in perfect concord, receiving instruction from a white man and a Luo!

One of the students led him to Barongo's dwelling. His old friend ran out joyfully, and grasping Sindiga's proffered hand in both his, drew him inside and forced him into a high European chair! He was the same jovial, spirited, good fellow Nyambati's son had always known him to be, changed only in respect of his attire, which rather became him. The two were soon recounting all that had happened to them since their separation.

Machuki, the son of old Nyarango, had been the

means of breaking down Barongo's prejudices against Christian missions. He it was with whom Barongo had been associating at the beginning of Sindiga's third year's work on the railway. Whenever the two met, Machuki used to urge Barongo to accompany him to the mission school, with the result that finally the latter's curiosity had triumphed. He had gone with Machuki to school, had subsequently been converted to Christianity, and was hoping some day to become a teacher-evangelist himself. His parents had turned against him, and he was being ostracized by many of his old friends; but never once had he regretted the step he had taken. He was learning, he said, that life held joys greater than eating and drinking—joys that surpassed the wildest dreams of his youth.

Concluding his story, Barongo said: "I suppose you have seen and learned a good deal in the land of the white men?"

Barongo as yet knew nothing about geography. He supposed that Europe was a territory no bigger than Kavirondo, and within a few days' march, and that Nairobi was the center of the white man's civilization —the very hub of the money-making world. He thought of the capital of Kenya with something of the awe with which young Dick Whittington of Gloucester is supposed to have thought of London. But he had never been there, and Sindiga himself had to explain to his student friend that the white man's homeland was afar off, many countries and many seas intervening. He had to explain that his contract had not taken him even as far as Nairobi, but he had been associated with those who had been there. He had seen many Europeans and many unbelievable wonders, but nothing more wonderful than the railway. He described the work he had done on the new line, ending up with some of his impressions of the different nationalities and tribes he had met.

"Do you remember, Barongo," he queried, "that when I went away you said the white man's friendship was a shadow?"

Barongo did remember. . . . "I was very ignorant in those days," he declared. "I have learned since that the black man hasn't a better or a truer friend than the white man under the sun."

"That is a great deal more than I would dare say," Sindiga replied. "But I have witnessed their friendship for each other, and their kindness to people in distress. Their customs are bad, but their hearts are good."

"I am indeed glad you think so!" Barongo interrupted. "So many men go from here as convinced as I am of the white man's good intentions, and after working up the line for some months come back embittered against all Europeans and scornful of civilization. I was somewhat afraid that you might come back an enemy of civilization yourself."

"Friend, I am that!" exclaimed Nyambati's son then, his eyes suddenly flashing. "And, Barongo, listen to me. If we have an enemy among the white men, it is the missionary. He it is who wishes to foist upon us the white man's customs. . . . Full of error, full of terrible evils are they. The Government indeed levies taxes, but it leaves ancient tradition alone. It supports the authority of the old men who enact for us good laws. The Government neither breaks down our tribal customs nor poisons the minds of the young men. That is what missions are doing. I beg you to break away, Barongo. Don't you see? . . . The white traders want our goods, the Government our money, and the white farmers our strength, but only the missionary wants our souls!"

"Sindiga!" cried Barongo, taken aback by this sudden outburst. "You don't understand—any more than I did before I came to the mission here. Recall for one moment the words of Zakawa—he who foretold the white man's coming. . . . 'You Abagusii,' he used to say, 'you

forget the past and care not for the future!' Truly, truly spoke he, for a new Day has dawned and we are not mindful of it. We blind our eyes to the future, and have forgotten our past. The white men forget nothing. They write down their histories from the very earliest times in books, and white children read of the deeds of their ancestors. Perhaps Manyanta, our great forefather, thought to escape civilization when he came to these hills. Probably he thought that away from it his children would eradicate greed, and war, and slavery from their midst, and become an example to the whole world. Instead, what has happened? We have become indolent, dirty, prejudiced—the astonishment of a wiser-growing human race. Think! Think, Sindiga! It is because we cannot govern ourselves that the Almighty God has permitted the white men to come and rule us. But Jesus Christ, of whom the missionaries tell—if we learn of him—he will teach us how to rule ourselves. A new life is beckoning to us, infinitely better than the old. . . . To think, to learn, to grow, to become sons of God! That should be the ambition of us all in these days! It is God Himself who wants our souls, to remake them: the missionaries are but His tools to raise us up.

XII

IN THE WILDS

SINDIGA LEFT THE MISSION DISAPPOINTED. THE MISconceptions of Christianity he had received at the railway camp stuck in his mind, and civilization seemed no whit more attractive on account of Barongo's having embraced it.

The more he thought of the mission in connection with his friend, the more he hated it. "Think!" Barongo had said. Sindiga—thinking harder than he ever had in his life before—said to himself: "To think is to perish." Not to think had been a proverb among the Abagusii for generations. Why did Barongo think? They had been taught to dig, to dance, to fight—to use their bodies and not their brains. To think, Sindiga argued with himself, was the sick man's pleasure—the weakness of hoary old age. On the other hand, action was manly and profitable and a safeguard against the multitudinous deceptions of an evil age.

Acting on his convictions Sindiga worked harder than ever cutting sticks for his dwelling. When he had cut sufficient he astonished his uncle with the declaration that his intentions were to build himself a hut up in the hills, near the border of the Lumbwa country—as far away as possible, he explained, from the mission and civilization. He proved that he meant what he said by starting forthwith to carry off the prepared building material to the site chosen.

A wilder spot it would be difficult to imagine. Beyond the rhinoceros swamps it lay—a deep, fern-clad

valley nestling under the lee of acacia-crowned hills. When first discovered by man, herds of elephant had roamed it, and hippopatami had disported themselves in the river which wound its silver way through the middle of it. These denizens of the wilds had for years been migrating to the south and east; but once in a while the elephants would revisit their old haunts and play havoc with the corn-fields. The natives, especially the Masais, used to go after them on foot—the Abagusii with no other weapons than their light hunting spears. Leopards and hyenas prowled through the bush of the valley by night, and baboons barked defiance at passers-by by day. The wild boar and the buffalo roamed the neighboring valleys, and the lion—that king of beasts—was not altogether a stranger there.

Sindiga had no thought of living long in this remote spot alone. He counted on Barongo's wearying sooner or later with civilization, just as he had himself. Barongo had not altered greatly, and Sindiga had no doubt that his friendship for himself was as strong as ever. He would give him time. Then—at some convenient season—he would go to him and say: "Brother, you have learned to read and write—what more do you want from the white men? You have made friends with strangers; come back now to your oldest friend. Give up religion, and rejoice the hearts of your sorrowing parents."

Barongo, he felt sure, would consent to leave the mission, and there would be a great feast to celebrate his "conversion." Goats would be burned as sacrifices, and his clan would heartily welcome him back, giving thanks to the spirits of his forefathers. Then Barongo would come and live with him; the wild beauty and the rich soil of the secluded valley would present an irresistible appeal to him, and together they would herd cattle where the grass and the clover were greenest.

Sindiga's plan took in even the possibility of one or

the other, or both, getting married. In such a case they would build two kraals instead of one, and start a colony. Nyanguka and other of their old-time friends would join them, and there they would all live prosperous and happy, and clear of the menace of civilization. . . . Sindiga planned hopefully, joyfully, confident that Barongo would one day come to himself and, wearying of the ways of strangers, be glad of an invitation to throw in his lot with a kindred spirit.

Notwithstanding the fact that, while getting together the materials for his hut, Sindiga put in several hours' work each day digging for his uncle, his own work progressed apace. The bush was soon all cut down on the site he had chosen, and piled high to serve as firewood. This done, he dug up the roots left in the ground, disposed of the turf, and leveled the area he required for a hut. The sticks which were to reinforce the mud wall were stuck upright in a shallow, circular ditch, and secured in position with supple withes interlaced. For binding twine Sindiga used the bark of the bushes he had cut down. To the top of the skeleton wall he tied straight sticks which, rising in the shape of a cone, formed the basis of a roof. To these he tied other sticks for rafters and the framework was complete, needing only plaster and thatch to make it a habitation fit for man.

Now his cousins brought their bundles of grass, and Sindiga, beginning at the bottom of the overhanging eaves and working upwards towards the top of the cone, laid them on thinly with the roots outside. The tops of the grasses he twisted round the slender rafters, thus securing the thatch from being blown off by the wind.

As soon as the roof was completed his uncle's wives and daughters were sent to plaster the walls, this being an art that only women are supposed to know. They brought baskets of cow-dung, and mixed it with wet clay by treading it with their feet. Finally they laid

this on the walls, inside and outside, smoothing it with the palms of their hands, and thus the house was finished.

Sindiga stayed on at his uncle's until the plaster dried out, spending the mornings hoeing and the afternoons walking, dancing, or otherwise recreating himself in company with his cousins, by whom he was almost worshiped. They looked up to him not only as a warrior of considerable renown, but also as an intrepid adventurer into White Man's Land. They all regretted his leaving them, and when the day came a dozen of their number engaged in a lively argument as to who was best fitted to accompany him and help him with his cooking. Out of this friendly, earnest crowd Sindiga selected one whose name was Ontegi, a likable youth of not more than twelve or thirteen summers. The rest extorted from him a promise that he would be sure to visit them frequently, and they made a similar promise to Sindiga of their own accord.

On the day of his departure he was given a "cribful" of *wimbi*, with which to start housekeeping. The crib was borne away by sixteen of his uncle's grown sons, and set up a hundred yards or so from his hut, the grain itself being carried off in baskets by the women and children.

The African cribs are interesting. They are large wicker receptacles in which each family keeps a stock of grain sufficient to last from one year's end to another. Of course the man with the greatest number of wives owns also the greatest number of corn-cribs. They are made as nearly rat-proof as possible, daubed with "native plaster" and set up on timber supports conveniently near to the kraal, or (in the case of some tribes) inside the kraal itself. A hole is left at the top of the structure sufficiently large to scramble through if necessary, and a large thatched roof crowns the giant basket, making it look from a distance like an ordinary native dwelling.

The Abagusii use their corn-cribs almost entirely for the storage of *wimbi*, which is their staple food.[1] They practically subsist on cereal food, milk, and greens, and but rarely eat meat. When they do eat it they are apt to eat it to excess, with a result that they are laid up for a day or two afterwards with indigestion. *Wimbi* is a kind of small millet. It bears a divided ear upon each stalk, and under favorable conditions grows as high as wheat. The cutting of the ears one at a time by hand in the fall is tedious work, but an occasion for general rejoicings if the harvest is fairly good. In the lower parts of Gusii the grain ripens in August, but higher up in the hills the harvest is delayed until October.

When the *wimbi* has all been garnered the natives give themselves over to merrymaking, with dancing and singing, until the commencement of the hoeing season in December. The grain is thrashed by the women as required, by pounding in a hollow tree stump.[2] The flour is cooked in an earthen vessel balanced on three stones which serve as a fire-grate. According as to whether the flour is mixed with much or little water, it is called "porridge" or "bread" but in neither case does it get much cooking. *Wimbi* bread is a stiff, sticky, brown dough, and the porridge a thin, cocoa-colored gruel. The bread is helped down with sour milk or wild herbs as a rule, varied occasionally with fowl in the case of the menfolk. There are well over a dozen different kinds of *wimbi*, each variety having its own Gusii name. *Mtama* (Kaffir-corn) and maize the Abagusii regard as very inferior foods.

. . . Sindiga procured for himself a grindstone, a stool, and a cooking pot or two—which comprise the furniture

[1] The Abagusii eat no artificially sweetened foods, nor foods prepared with fat; and it is a fact worth noting that besides having remarkably fine teeth they are much healthier than tribes, such as the Masais, who live chiefly on animal flesh.

[2] In parts of Russia, corn is similarly thrashed, as required by the housewife.

or utensils in a Gusii hut, apart from the inevitable low bed. As soon as he had made for himself first a wicker door, and then a bedstead, he commenced cutting down the bush for a corn-field of his own. All the heavy timber he came across in the process he stacked together, intending later to use it for the construction of a cattle enclosure.

The cattle Sindiga had received for his sister Nyakiage and those he had bought with his savings were herded together with his uncle's cattle. He was now reasonably well-to-do for an Amogusii, but by no means satisfied. As long as natives are isolated from civilization their thoughts remain centered on their livestock, and Sindiga—now the owner of a fair number of cattle, sheep, and goats—was no exception to the rule. His cattle began to figure predominantly in his mind, and desire to see them multiplying became the chief desire of his heart.

Nor was he content that his cattle should remain forever in the keeping of his uncle. To a native's ear the soft sound of cattle, breathing under the eaves of a hut at night, is the sweetest music on earth. So Sindiga coveted a kraal of his own full of cattle. To this end he planned and worked. When he grew tired of timber-felling and hoeing, he bartered cattle for goats, and goats for more cattle, thereby increasing his stock—and all the while his horizon was narrowing. The advent of the white men had made him think; his three years' contact with a new world had clarified his thoughts and enlarged his vision; but removed now from the influences that had stirred his inmost soul, Nyambati's son began to forget the big, wonderful, threatening world beyond and to recede, as it were, within himself. He began to be satisfied with his mental attainments, and to think solely of his cattle and his food. He discarded blankets for day wear entirely in favor of a cowhide, and painted himself all over with red and white

ocher; also he allowed his hair to grow long, and plastered it with clay and butter, as had been the fashion in the days before the advent of the white men.

But not for long was he to revel in this sort of an existence, without anyone to think of but himself, his immediate relatives, and a far-away friend who he hoped would one day repent and likewise turn savage. He was busy digging his garden one noon, hoping to finish before the rain came on, when he was hailed by a European.

Dropping his hoe he ran forward to greet the stranger, who returned his salutation in Ki-Swahili and asked: "Can you direct me to the mission?"

"Yes, sir," Sindiga made reply, "but it is a long way from here, and you are no little distance from the road. I will go before you."

"Thank you, friend," replied the stranger; "but first, say, have you any water over there at your house?"

Sindiga answered dubiously: "There is water there, sir, but it is not good enough for a white man."

"Never mind," replied the visitor, "I am thirsty."

While they were talking Ontegi had come up with a bundle of sticks, and had started making a fire. When he saw a white man making for the hut with Sindiga, he screwed himself round to the opposite side of the fire. . . . It was the first white man he had ever seen.

Besides the large pot in which he stored water and one good cooking pot, Sindiga possessed but one other receptacle capable of holding water, and that was the gourd from which he drank his porridge. Ontegi offered to wash it, but his cousin laughed at the idea.

"You might wash it clean enough for me," he said, "but you have no idea of washing for a white man!"

Sindiga washed and rinsed the gourd many times, and then offered it to the European for his inspection.

"It will do," the stranger assured him with a smile.

The first and second gourdfuls Sindiga poured out

had a few minute particles of grass floating on the surface.

"Ontegi," he remarked, "this water is not good enough. You had better go and fetch some more from the river."

Ontegi rose up to go, but the white man intervened, saying again, "It will do, thank you. A particle of grass is nothing."

Sindiga knew he could not offer the European *wimbi* bread, cooked native fashion, but he was busily thinking. When he saw the stranger drink deeply of the clear, cold water, he turned again to Ontegi.

"The European has come a long way," he said, "and is sure to be hungry. Run and fetch some maize and roast it on the cob—white men eat maize—and take the gourd and bring some milk."

It so happened that the white man was glad to avail himself of the Kaffir's hospitality. He ate several cobs of corn, and essayed to drink the milk. It had been soured, however, for the Abagusii never drink fresh milk, and Sindiga supposed that Europeans were no different to them in preferring sour to fresh milk.

Having sipped the milk, the stranger handed it to Ontegi saying, "I am full, having eaten so much corn; you drink it."

The boy did not need a second bidding, but devoured half of it in a few mouthfuls and handed the remainder back to his cousin.

Having finished off the corn between them, they rose together, and Sindiga led the way up the hill and down into the next valley. It was clouding up for rain, but the idea of putting his own work before duty to a stranger never occurred to the savage.

A stream too wide for jumping, and unbridged, crossed their path at the bottom of the hill. Quick as thought, Sindiga said: "Don't take your shoes and

stockings off, sir. I will carry you over if you will let me. Just jump on my back."

They were across in a moment and proceeding on their way. Sindiga went first, chatting gaily as he went along; the white man went next, and Ontegi silently brought up the rear. The boy was mentally comparing the white man's skin to butter, and wondering whether his flesh was as soft.

They must have traveled seven or eight miles when at last they stepped onto a highway.

"Gusii paths are bad," remarked Sindiga. "You would never have found the way by yourself."

The European would have paid Sindiga for his trouble, but he emphatically declined to accept anything. When the white man would have pressed him, he bade him an abrupt good-bye, and turning on his heel, strode rapidly away.

The European turned to Ontegi. "Come, *you* won't refuse money, will you?" he said.

The boy faltered between a desire to emulate his cousin, and desire for the coins, but only for an instant. He remembered the bright, colored beads one of his brothers had bought from an Indian storekeeper for a few cents, and other cheap ornaments worn by his playfellows. Then he hung his head and held out both his hands.

In presenting both hands, Ontegi did as any native would have done under similar circumstances, no matter how small the gift; it was the right and proper thing to do according to Gusii custom. No one ever dreams of holding out one hand for a gift. . . . Whether by so doing one magnifies the gift and hence the giver, or merely exhorts the bountiful one to press on to higher heights of liberality, it is somewhat hard to say.

Having bade his benefactor an earnest good-bye, Ontegi ran and caught up with his cousin. It was not long before the storm overtook them, dispelling any thoughts

Sindiga may have had of continuing his work that afternoon.

Over their evening meal Ontegi remarked to Sindiga: "That European was a good man, but he ate like an ox—just as though he were chewing the cud!"

"All white men eat like that," Sindiga explained. "When anyone gives *us* food to eat, we smack our lips to show how good we think it is; but the white man's customs are different. When he ate as he did, with his mouth closed tight, he had no thought or intention of being rude."

Strangely enough, that same week another European passed through the same locality, but accompanied by a retinue of porters carrying loads. One of these men, a Kitutu, lagged behind the rest. Plainly he was lame, for he walked with a decided limp, and seemed hard put to it to keep up with the rest.

Years before, it will be remembered, when Ondieki—Sindiga's avowed enemy—was being goaded along with spear-pricks by Lumbwa captors, the young warrior of Kanyimbo had leapt unhesitatingly to his rescue. No less readily now he advanced to carry the white man's burden in the lame porter's stead. He made a cushion of his blanket, and placing this on his head, balanced the sixty-pound load thereon and hurried after the procession.

The grateful Kitutu sank down on a boulder with a big sigh of relief. Taking a knife from his girdle, he attacked the sole of his foot where a large thorn had broken off in the flesh. He dug into the leathery skin fully half an inch without drawing blood. Then, having exposed the head of the thorn, he grasped it between finger and thumb and extracted it without difficulty.

The other porters were by this time well ahead and out of sight. They had tied the tall grass growing by the wayside into knots and dropped sticks in the pathway, to indicate the direction in which they had gone,

so the Kitutu was able to follow them without difficulty. He caught up finally with Sindiga, whom he found at the head of the procession.

Not until he thought the other was well rested would Nyambati's son relinquish the load. He had barely parted with it when the white man caught sight of him.

"Hi! Mogaka," he called to the man who carried his rifle and water-bottle. "Grab hold of that big fellow there and give him something to carry!"

Sindiga heard, and promptly bolted.

"Here! Come back, you lazy rascal!" shouted the white man. "Come and help—you will get your pay."

But the only answer Sindiga gave was a decided "Ya-ya, bwana!" (No, sir) as he disappeared amid the tall bushes. . . . He warmly resented the stranger's having accosted him without a greeting. The white men know a good deal, thought he, indignation boiling up within him, but they certainly have no manners, and know less than nothing about the simplest rudiments of etiquette! (Ki-Swahili—*desturi.*)

He did not see another European for some considerable time, but was reminded of their increasing influence by Ontegi's coming to him one day with a request to be allowed to attend a mission outschool a few miles down the valley. Sindiga forbade him, but he went nevertheless and would not be prevented. With the cents the European had given him he bought, instead of beads, a slate and a small reader. He begged Sindiga not to betray him to his father, who would surely flog him for attending school if he heard about it, and worked all the harder to give his cousin satisfaction.

At night when hyenas and jackals were howling on the hill, Sindiga would tell his small cousin grim tales of wild beasts and their ferocity, ending up with: "One of these days you are bound to meet with a leopard, or a lion, or a rhinoceros on your way to school. They

waylay all schoolgoers, and that slate will most certainly give you away."

The only effect these stories had on Ontegi was to make him covet, and at last procure, a spear, which article soon became his constant companion on his travels back and forth to school. Sindiga had frequent occasion to compliment him on his hunting skill when time and again he found, pegged out to dry beside his hut, the skins of innumerable small animals. These skins Ontegi pieced together into sleeping rugs, sighing always in a manly fashion for bigger game.

He insisted on telling Sindiga what he learned at school, and never omitted to mention any adventure in the bush which he thought might interest his cousin. Battles with snakes, the slaying of a hawk in flight by means of a sling, the discovery of a litter of young porcupines, and once, his meeting with a live hyena which ran away, were all duly recounted by Ontegi.

The boy had happened upon the above-mentioned hyena by the wayside, crunching up in its huge jaws the bones of a dead cow. Ontegi had yelled and shaken his spear, whereat—being a cowardly animal—it had retreated precipitately into the bush. But what chiefly excited Ontegi in the telling was the fact of his having seen—so he declared—the spoor of a lion in the vicinity of the dead cow. Sindiga knew well enough that the king of beasts rarely went foraging without a retinue of hungry hyenas and jackals, anxious for his leavings, but a lion had not been seen in the locality for years. He saw fit to discredit the boy's story on the score of his having too lively an imagination, declaring that the cow had probably been lame or sick, and consequently an easy prey to the hyena.

He asked Ontegi if he had any idea whose cow it might have been. The boy replied that it may have belonged to a herd of some twenty cows which had recently been brought to graze in the locality on account

of the excellent pasture it afforded. The herd was usually to be seen, he said, on the summit of a flat-topped hill, overlooking a swamp infested by rhinoceroses.

It was not many days after his encounter with the hyena that Ontegi came to his cousin with definite assurance that one or more lions had visited the district. His voice and manner testified to the dawnings of fear within him. He had come across the herdman in charge of the kine making wild lament because, following upon the disappearance of a large cow, one evening at twilight a very fine calf had been carried off by a lion before his very eyes. He was herding cattle for someone else, he had told Ontegi, who would have no scruple at withholding his wage when he heard of the loss he had sustained.

"He is just that sort," the herdman had said, "and I need the money he promised me if I am to pay my tax this year."

Sindiga now became positively alarmed for Ontegi's safety, and tried harder than ever to dissuade him from going to school, but he found that his young friend had come under an influence stronger than his growing fear of wild beasts, and more compelling than his wealth of affection. Plainly, Sindiga decided, Christianity made people stubborn; and noting Ontegi's fixedness of purpose in the face of a real danger, he began to wonder whether, after all, he would ever be successful in reclaiming his older friend, Barongo, from the "error of his ways."

Then one day he was surprised out of all the unanswerable arguments he had intended to use in this connection, by a visit from Barongo himself. Sindiga had thought no one but his uncle's family knew of his retreat in the wilds; but it appeared that Barongo had had occasion to visit the valley bush-school, and had there made Ontegi's acquaintance; and no one ever made Ontegi's acquaintance without soon hearing elo-

quent mention of Sindiga, the son of Nyambati and of Manga. Thus it came about that one sultry December noon, returning from a futile hunt for the lion's lair, Sindiga found Barongo at his hut door waiting for him.

Sindiga was so pleased to see his friend that the idea of embarking on so controversial a subject as religion never occurred to him.

Barongo was transported with the wildness and obvious fertility of the country around Sindiga's abode. As they walked together he talked appreciatively of the timber on the hillsides, of the water in the valley, of the house Sindiga had built, of the size of his garden, and of Ontegi, but never a word concerning himself or the mission. They dined that evening on *wimbi* bread and deer's meat; and Barongo bestowed on Ontegi more compliments in regard to his cooking than the youth, in all his days, was destined to receive for his scholarship at school.

"I thought you would probably settle down in the wilds," Barongo remarked, smiling across a big joint of venison at his friend. As if expecting no reply to this reflection, he went on to inquire if wild beasts were at all numerous in the district.

Ontegi and Sindiga were both preparing to answer when a roar—sounding more like the crashing of thunder over their native hills than anything they had ever heard in their lives before—startled them to their feet. The roar was followed by a yell of fear and dismay which seemed to come from the rear of the hut.

Sindiga sprang across the room and drew from beneath the rafters a heavy spear—the spear old Nyambati had wrested from a Masai. Barongo, as nimble as ever, seized Sindiga's hunting spear, and was out of the door first.

"Fasten the door—tight!" Sindiga commanded Ontegi, and rushed after his friend.

Another scream—of agony this time—and by the light

of the moon the two men saw the shaggy head of a lion, raised above a human body. Two baleful eyes watched their approach with terrible intentness.

Almost simultaneously, the lion and Barongo leapt. Two spears together sought the lion's heart; two spears grazed the lion's ribs, occasioning another ear-splitting roar; two men sprang back with spears quivering in taut arms. Terrified and unnerved, Ontegi from within screamed his apprehension.

The prone figure at the rear of the hut did not move. Neither did the lion attempt to return to it, but leapt first at the one and then at the other erect, yelling spearman.

. . . Strange fate that should have brought the two friends together to fight such a battle as this side by side! In those thrilling, anxious moments, Sindiga, in his cow-hide, proved himself as much of a man as Barongo; and Barongo, in his cotton shirt, collar, and tie, as much a savage as Sindiga! Sindiga, who had quailed at his first sight of a harmless locomotive, and Barongo, who would have quailed too had he been there, faced the king of beasts for the first time in their lives with boldness. Each for the other and both for humanity—personified in that still figure under the eaves—fought valiantly, unselfishly, with never a thought of flight.

Wounded and enraged, the lion sprang again and again at their throats, but either it landed on air or upon harrowing spear-point.

Again and again its fierce, indomitable assailants thrust at it, rarely missing their aim. They were dancing now—dancing the wild Gusii war-dance, both tense with determination to kill or to be killed. The pride of Kanyimbo of days that were no more—two of the bravest warriors of the Kitutu clan—were battling for the honor of Gusii and the life of a man. They cared not who he was, lying there so still in the shadow, but

they recognized their solemn duty to fight for him as long as they had life left in their bodies.

It was Nyambati's spear that dealt the fatal blow, and Sindiga in his heart thanked Nyambati's spirit for the victory. . . . Might it not be that, together with Barongo's ejaculation of praise to the Creator of men, his thankfulness too was received in heaven? Sindiga knew not whom to thank, and so he thanked the only father he had ever known.

But what the overcomers next beheld inspired them with greater awe than did the lion's first electrifying roar. Turning away from the dying lion they came face to face with Ontegi. Prompted by faith in Barongo's God, he had come out to watch the conflict. Down in the dewy grass he had knelt when he saw the fighters hard pressed, and prayed passionately to the Creator and Father of men.

The picture of the boy kneeling there in the moonlight, with hands clasped and head bent in silent worship of the Great Spirit, engraved itself indelibly on Sindiga's mind. Even as he reprehended the boy, he sensed the sublimity of his faith; and there awoke in his soul a craving of which he was half ashamed, to know more of the White Man's God, who—unlike the wealth and power that upheld his civilization—was accessible, apparently, to all; but Barongo left early the next morning, and if Sindiga had any intention of broaching the subject he did not have the opportunity.

The momentary hunger soon left him, and the idea of God receded into the background of his consciousness; his suspicion of the missionaries' motives and his hatred of civilization returned. Notwithstanding, he had had a fleeting glimpse of a Power which operated differently from the lure of the white man's civilization.

The stranger, whose presence near the rear of the hut had occasioned that first terrible roar, was less severely injured than his deliverers had had good reason

to expect. He had been stunned by the lion's first sudden assault, and did not regain consciousness for several hours. When he came to, he refused point-blank to reveal what had brought him lurking in the rear of the hut at night.

Besides a torn side and a mutilated hand, he bore the imprint of the beast's claws on his scalp. Happily none of these wounds were deep, and Barongo, who examined them, expressed his conviction that they would not take long to heal. Having learned at the mission something of the value of water, he washed the wounds himself before leaving, while Sindiga and Ontegi between them dragged the lion's carcass into the doorway out of reach of hyenas.

After Barongo's departure at dawn of the following day, Sindiga flayed the dead lion and pegged out the skin to dry. He gave Ontegi its fat for the treatment of his father's rheumatism and his mother's lumbago.

The sick man lay on Sindiga's bed for two whole days without showing any inclination to move or talk. Then on the third day, while Ontegi was out hunting firewood and Sindiga was busy at work in his garden, he suddenly disappeared.

Behind the bed on which the stranger had lain, Sindiga found a scrap of soiled paper on which certain words were written in pencil. Not being able to read himself, he put the paper in his *kipandi* case, intending to ask Ontegi to try to decipher the writing when he came home; but when his cousin returned the scrap of paper was forgotten.

XIII

AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY

By this time the area Sindiga had reclaimed for a *wimbi* patch was ready for sowing, but this work could not safely be started until it was fairly certain that the rainy season had properly begun. In other parts of Kavirondo the natives depend upon a "weather prophet" to tell them when to start sowing, but in Gusii it is customary for every man to decide the auspicious time for himself. There were as yet no signs that the rains had come to stay; in fact, beyond one short shower, there had been no rain for a couple of months. So Sindiga decided to pay Barongo a visit, and then set out for Boguche in search of his half-sister and Nyanguka.

From Sindiga's abode to the mission was half a day's journey by the straightest paths he knew, but curiosity prompted him to go by way of Ontegi's school, which necessitated something of a detour. Knowing only approximately where it lay—down the valley and beyond a papyrus swamp—he decided he would discover its exact whereabouts and then proceed directly to Nyanchwa and the mission.

The course of the valley led directly into the swamp, which owed its existence to the damming of a stream at the lower end by a shelf of hard granite. Rounding a bend in the valley, Sindiga came into full view of it, and on a neighboring hillside a lonely herd of cattle—presumably the one Ontegi had referred to.

On an eminence stood the herdman, talking with another native who wore cotton clothing, a felt hat, and

brown boots. The latter appeared to be "laying down the law" with no little emphasis to judge by his gesticulations; for he pushed his chin out, and stamped, and thumped the palm of one hand with his fist, and ended up by shaking that member in the other's face.

Sindiga approached the pair unobserved: he had recognized at once, with another mild shock of surprise, Ondieki—the son of the Kitutu soothsayer.

It is no part of Gusii etiquette to abstain from listening to conversation intended for another's ears. Not only have the intelligent to do the work of newspapers, hearing and reporting all they can for the common good, but it is generally conceded that listening to the discussions of others makes a person shrewd and discriminating, at the same time often adding to one's vocabulary! Sindiga, therefore, with a perfectly clear conscience, drew a little nearer, keeping his ears well open to catch every word spoken; and what he heard puzzled him more than Ondieki's presence there.

"It's settled, it's settled!" he heard him reiterate. "Did you get my letter?"

"I would have if you hadn't sent your man such a long way round with it," replied the herdman sullenly.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Ondieki.

"Didn't you send him to spy on Barongo, the son of Kibagendi?"

"What if I did?"

The other merely nodded. . . . After a pause he said: "Tell me, have you seen him since?"

"No. Plague take the dolt."

"Not such a dolt as you suppose. Do you know he has been the guest of Barongo's bosom friend, Sindiga, for two whole days or more?"

"What!" exclaimed Ondieki. "That subtle savage! That low-down son of a Lumbwa up yonder? . . . No!"

"The same."

"Kai! . . . He cared for the girl once himself!" On-

dieki's eyes narrowed as he said this, like one who pits his brains against another's.

Sindiga, who had heard these last words distinctly, caught his breath in amazement as the memory of Zakawa's black-eyed daughter came back to him. She was one of three who were not to marry till all the old prophet's predictions had come true—the merriest and the wildest of the three sisters. He found himself wondering what sort of a husband Ondieki would make her.

"You see that her father gets the cattle," he heard him say then, "and I will see to the rest."

Emerging from the bush Sindiga strode forward with a lurch that rather became him. Ondieki, beholding him, had a sudden foreboding of ill, and bidding the herdman a hasty farewell made good his departure.

Meanwhile Ontegi, quite oblivious of the trio, was loitering on the lower slopes of that same hill. He had turned aside to listen to the passionate, but unmelodious solos of a male Kavirondo crane. He had watched the fair object of its adoring song coyly advance, and as coyly retreat, and by this time was thoroughly absorbed watching a regular crane courtship. The strange antics of the two proud-stepping birds fascinated him so completely that school was, for the time being, absolutely forgotten.

Beautiful, golden-crested birds they were, proud of eye and kingly of mien. The natives refrain from killing their species because of a belief that to do so would bring dire calamity upon the tribe. When the pair pecked beaks, or—standing some little distance apart—gobbled protestations of devotion to each other, Ontegi yelled delightedly; at which sound the birds would decorously separate and endeavor to hide their confusion in a sedulous hunt for insects. Ontegi would then find new occasion for mirth in the way they coaxed grasshoppers and ants out of their hiding places by stamping upon the ground with their feet. They really

did look comical, stamping around with their long legs every bit as seriously as if there wasn't a bigger business under the sun than driving insects out of holes!

The boy was at length recalled to himself by the sound of a distant drum. This drum he knew was summoning him to school, and his hunger for knowledge was too real to allow of his long ignoring its insistent tattooing. Its monotone, as a matter of fact, thrilled him immensely; for was it not his own school's drum —the drum belonging to the "best school of all"? He yielded to a strong temptation to surprise the cranes with one furious rush in their direction, and then— as they soared screaming into the air—picked up his slate, and turned to answer the summons.

If Nyambati's son had had any intentions of pursuing Ondieki, they were forestalled by a sudden commotion among the cattle and the appearance of Ontegi near the margin of the swamp. The herd had strayed a considerable distance down the hill and were grazing near the margin of the swamp, which to Sindiga's certain knowledge was the haunt of at least one family of rhinoceroses. Suddenly two cows in the lead bolted, and passing within a few yards of Ontegi, plunged directly for the swamp. It may have been due to the bite of some venomous insect, or to some private quarrel which none but the cows themselves could account for; but certain it was that although the herdman shouted, and Ontegi ran to head them off, they eluded Ontegi, and with tails waving defiance vanished among the reeds of the swamp.

Sindiga, alarmed for Ontegi's safety, and the herdman, chiefly concerned about his cattle, rushed forward together. They ran with their spears aloft in case they should be attacked from some unexpected quarter. Ontegi too entered the reeds, brandishing his spear in a manly fashion, but a peremptory command from Sindiga that he should stay and mind the cattle halted

him at once. Somewhat ruefully he retraced his steps, compelled as much by Gusii tradition as by love for Sindiga to do what he was told. Among savages obedience is a cardinal virtue; youth must submit, not only to old and middle age, but to the behest of every youthful dictator who can lay claim to any slight seniority in years. And age is reckoned, not by birthdays but by the number of past events one can remember or, by tribes that circumcise, from the date of circumcision. Provided that a man's character is unstained by any reproach of cowardice, he is entitled to the unquestioning obedience of all his juniors; and as a rule men, youths, and children obey their elders gladly—even proudly.

Sindiga, in pushing forward at the herdman's side on the trail of Ondieki's strayed cattle, was obedient to Gusii tradition. The universally neglected Golden Rule is adhered to more often in Central Africa than anywhere else in the world. It is true Sindiga's mind was in something of a tumult over the strange conversation he had just heard, the possible portents of which were bewildering. Nevertheless, one thing was perfectly clear to him: his duty as an Omogusii, to render the unlucky herdman all the help he was capable of giving, could not be doubted. To have turned back, or to have proceeded directly on his way, would have been tantamount to acknowledging himself, if not a very Lumbwa, at least a despiser of Gusii tradition.

They lost sight of the cows until they stumbled into a muddy lane which they immediately recognized as a regular rhinoceros thoroughfare. A few yards down it, soberly gazing in their direction, were the cattle they sought. Unfortunately ere either Sindiga or the herdman could decide on a course to pursue, their presence in the swamp had been scented from afar off by a lordly rhinoceros and its mate.

The pair had been relaxing in one of their favorite mud baths near the middle of the swamp, and they

profoundly resented the advent of cows and men into their domains. Venting their indignation in a terrible snort of rage, they got up clumsily from their bath and made a bee line for the cows, ascertaining their whereabouts entirely by their sense of smell. Had no reeds intervened, they would scarcely have seen the cows for a rhinoceros' eyesight is about as poor as its sense of smell is acute.

Sindiga and the herdman had no way of telling whether they or the cattle had been scented; but they promptly scared the cows with shrill whistles, and then stood ready themselves with their spears poised to ward off an attack.

It was well for the cows that they bolted promptly, for a moment after their excited tails had waved the signal of retreat, two wild-eyed rhinoceroses were stamping over the spot, and goring the ground beneath them as though they would tear the solid earth to pieces.

Someone has said of the rhinoceros that it possesses "a face like a bad temper." The two that turned to face Sindiga and the herdman were quite the most diabolical-looking creatures either of the men had ever set eyes upon. Native tradition has it that their kind more often than not act cowardly when attacked, so that they are feared less than buffaloes. But the two Sindiga and the herdman had the temerity to face were on this occasion anything but cowardly. They soon gave up goring the ground and charged full tilt upon the two men, who stood their ground till the brutes were nearly upon them and then sprang quickly aside.

As the animals plunged past they stabbed with their spears; but beneath the hard mud that covered their huge bodies was a veritable armor of thick hide from which the weapons glanced without inflicting the slightest injury. Moreover, contrary to the expectations of the spearmen, the monsters swung round to renew their

attack with a rapidity of movement that was positively astounding, considering their ungainly appearance.

The female was the first to regain her bearings, and but for the terrific shout of warning Sindiga gave, she would have knocked down the herdman in the middle of a spear jig and trampled him to death. As it was she charged within a foot of him and disappeared down one of the green alleys which led through the reeds towards the center of the swamp. Having jumped clear of her only just in time, the herdman stood nerveless with fright at his narrow escape.

The male bellowed frightfully and rushed at Sindiga with menacing horn. Nyambati's son was well-prepared. Agile as these animals can be when fairly roused, the Kitutu was their match. He who had faced and slain a lion was determined not to quail before an animal which he regarded as belonging to the pig family. Two could scarcely hope to effect the slaying of a rhinoceros —that was a task for a band of armed men; but that they would succeed in scaring the beasts off and getting away with their lives and the cattle, Sindiga did not for one moment doubt.

Blind with rage the male animal bore down on Sindiga, who danced his defiance warily with Nyambati's ancient spear poised to meet the assault. Leaping energetically to one side as the brute came up, he thrust at its thick neck. The weapon drew blood, but Sindiga was forced to retreat precipitately as the animal swerved in his direction. The herdman had by this time sufficiently recovered his nerve to prod the creature's rear quarters, which caused it to lurch heavily to one side. Twisting round as rapidly as if it had a central pivot to turn on instead of four ponderous legs, it made for its latest assailant. The herdman yelled; then, quite despairing of ever seeing his cattle again, tore off down the muddy lane as fast as he could go, calling to Sindiga as he went to follow suit. But somewhere in the

rear of Sindiga was the female rhinoceros, and between him and the herdman her wounded mate, waddling after the retreating foe at a considerable speed and gaining upon him with every stride.

Sindiga had time to observe the man dash aside into the reeds as his awful pursuer floundered past; then, turning, he saw the two cows racing abreast down a newly beaten track with the female rhinoceros weltering in their wake. She had been bewildered by the futility of her repeated attacks, and after missing the herdman by the length of her longest horn, had left her foes so far behind as actually to lose scent of them. In order to recover her bearings, or out of sheer disgust, she had circled the swamp, thus getting wind of the cattle on her return.

Sindiga did not see the male animal again. Perhaps it had had enough; but the female was not so easily daunted. Sindiga now had to decide what he was going to do, and to decide quickly. He was standing on a little eminence, and all around him was marshy ground—he decided it would be best to stay where he was.

From where he stood a maze of muddy tracks led away in every direction. With upflung arms and a shrill whistle he startled the cattle into one that led directly away from the center of the swamp; then he braced himself in readiness to divert the rhinoceros into another.

He stood with his feet planted solidly a foot apart, his powerful shoulders set well back, his proud head held erect—a perfect picture of indomitable manhood. High above his head gleamed Nyambati's spear.

The rhinoceros smelt her foe, bellowed with combined rage and scorn, and lengthened her stride. She looked magnificent, and far more terrible, far more awe-inspiring, than her human antagonist. She was defending her native swamp against the family of two-legged creatures who were slowly exterminating her kind. Sin-

diga admired her gigantic limbs with their evidence of enormous strength, and inwardly applauded her reasons for resenting intruders; but the muscles of his right arm rippled, the spear became more agitated in his grasp, and the sole answer of his heart was a challenge.

It was the immutable challenge of his race to all the four-legged terrors of bush and swamp inhabiting his native land. Between savage beasts and the seed of Manyanta there could never be peace. He, the son of Nyambati, was but one humble participant in an age-long war, the end of which could not come till the whole of Gusii was safe for the Abagusii. The war was justifiable. Enemies that could neither be pacified, crushed, nor intimidated had to be killed, if killing were possible. He began to wish that he might kill the rhinoceros as he had the lion, but with the greater honor of doing it alone. He would be as ferocious as she. The whole world was savage, and everything in it; and the battle was to the cunning and the strong.

Sindiga's reflection filled a brief, exhilarating moment. Once he changed his position slightly, but he did so without lowering his spear. The monster charged. Down crashed the glittering spear with the force of a savage's spirit behind it. Guided unerringly by his powerful arm it entered the creature's body at one of the few joints in her armor of thick hide. It entered deeply and was wrenched clean out of his grasp as the animal fell over. Mortally wounded she staggered once to her feet and bellowed; but even as her conqueror wrenched his fell spear free, her great limbs doubled up under her weight, her huge body sagged, and she went down heavily never to rise again.

In the strength of dauntless manhood, and alone, Sindiga had slain the terror of the swamp lands, the unicorn of ancient mythology, the Abagusii's Grenfel!

He made but brief mention of his feat to the herdman. The fellow had shown himself faint-hearted, and

stories of daring deeds were suited only to the ears of daring men. Observing that the two refractory cattle were grazing peacefully with the rest, and bidding the herdman "sleep well," he instructed Ontegi to precede him along the narrow path and resumed his interrupted journey.

Let it not be supposed, however, that humility is a characteristic of Kaffirs; by them it is not even counted a virtue! The man capable of boasting his prowess in a tactful, convincing manner is regarded as a perfect man. At native football the victors have been seen to move from the field with the air of men thoroughly chastised and beaten, because, in the word-battle that followed the finish of the game, they were worsted and made a laughing stock of by the orators of the vanquished team. The oratorical triumph was to them more important than the fight itself. Therefore, Sindiga's reticence with Ondieki's servant was no indication of modesty. On the contrary, he exulted proudly in his achievement and was quite impatient to tell it. The slaying of a rhinoceros in single-handed combat was by no means a deed to be hushed up, and none had a better right than he to spread the news abroad, making it the topic of entertaining song.

As he proceeded on his way, he reflected how the recital would be applauded. At Nyanguka's kraal he would tell it, when the fighting men of olden days gathered together to feast with their friends of the past; when the ancients of Nyambati's own day, world-weary, deplored the times, calling for a tale of prowess; whenever, in fact, the hearts of his fellows needed regaling. When a bard was in demand, he—son of the "Great One," Kitutu of Kanyimbo, he, heir of Nyambati the dauntless—would himself take the harp; and, among other songs, he would assuredly sing them the song of his triumph in the great swamp.

He began by telling Ontegi all about it. And, as he

told it, he lived it all over again—running, leaping, roaring, stabbing, stamping with his feet, till Ontegi verily understood all that had happened as well as if he had seen it with his own eyes.

Sindiga did not lecture him for having loitered on the way to school—far from it. Rather he regarded it as a hopeful sign that his protégé and cook-boy was coming to his senses at last, and beginning to realize that there were many things in the world more interesting than chalked characters on a blackboard. Still, when Ontegi suggested his turning aside to see the school, he assured him pleasantly that this had been his intention, and bade his young cousin lead the way.

The school was a building about thirty feet long, possessing mud walls and windows lacking glass, and it was built on an expansive hilltop. Sindiga took cognizance of the fact that the Kitutus of Kanyimbo had once fought Lumbwa invaders here, and that near by was the identical spot where he had killed his first man, and avenged himself on the kidnaper of Keruo, the mother he had always loved but never known. The remembrance stirred him strangely; he stood as if looking at the school, but he saw something very different: Abagusii and Lumbwa fighting men, drawn up in long opposing lines, and one malignant face and form threatening him, taunting him, egging him on to fight and kill.

The old tribal wars, provocative of so much hatred and misery, were fast being forgotten. Secure from invasion, and multiplying more rapidly than the surrounding tribes, the Abagusii prospered. But Sindiga had observed that, though races no longer fought each other, individuals were arraying themselves against their neighbors in a new and terrible strife for personal gain. The welfare of the community was coming to be regarded as less important than individual aggrandizement. Wealthy natives were coming to dress like white

men and to acquire property, and paupers were beginning to waylay the more affluent ones on the highways to beg for "charity." Rich and poor alike were becoming self-centered, self-seeking, and self-willed. If Sindiga had been a Christian instead of a raw savage he would surely have recalled the prophecy of the apostle Paul: "In the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves." It seemed to Sindiga's untutored mind that a new war was on, in which every man was against his brother; a war which was likely to continue till half his race were as powerful as gods, and the other half reduced to the condition of abject slavery—and for all the strange anomalies of the new era, he blamed the white man and his silver shillings.

He left Ontegi at the school without going inside the building himself, but as he strode away in the direction of Nyanchwa, he heard the pupils singing; and the words they sang seemed to challenge his forebodings for the future. The tune was strange, but as they sang in the Ekegusii tongue Sindiga felt prompted to stand and listen.

> "—Peace on earth, goodwill to men,
> 'Twas thus the angels sang."

He had no idea what angels were, but the rest of the words sounded sensible. He pondered them—peace, with goodwill. Strange words for Christians to be singing!—Then he reflected that, of course, they had nothing to do with individual relationships. They had merely to do with peace between the tribes—peace such as the white men brought. That was just the trouble with the white man's religion—it did not affect the relations of man to brother man. As far as his observations went, it had nothing to do with love for one's neighbor. Did it not, while prescribing peace between the tribes, countenance individuals striving by every means to grow

richer and more powerful than their brethren, irrespective of whether they were wise, or brave, or good?

By slow degrees his mind reverted to the conversation he had overheard prior to his adventure in the swamp. —The herd of twenty cattle belonged to Ondieki, apparently, and the herdman was in Ondieki's employ; and so too, it appeared, was the man whom Barongo and he had rescued from the lion. Further, Ondieki actually wanted to marry Zakawa's daughter, the houri who had captured his own fancy in the days before the white men came. True, Ondieki had not mentioned either her or Zakawa by name, but he had clearly inferred that it was she. She was the only girl he—Sindiga —had ever cared for or thought of marrying.

Why, he now began to ask himself, had he never thought of her these many years, nor of marriage either? He no longer lacked the necessary cattle for a dowry; really it was high time he began to consider the question of marrying and begetting children, who would cherish his memory and call their children by his name. Apart from the fact that it was necessary to marry in order to have children, he told himself that he was not excessively anxious to get married. Gusii women by all accounts could be quite a trouble to their husbands. Wives were at best a mixed blessing—quite a problem, in fact. Now if only he could find a white lady, who would look after his children and home without having to be whipped every so often!—But no! He—Sindiga—marry a wife the color of sheep's fat! who walked all day as though she trod on cinders, and dressed as though ashamed of her own shoulders? Never! Not even if she were to *give* herself away, as he had heard was the custom of white people. Troublesome or not, he would have to seek out and marry a Gusii maiden sooner or later. At least he was in a position to rejoice her parents with a goodly cattle dowry, and that would somewhat soften the girl's heart towards him!

The words spoken by Ondieki in the train came back to him:

"Her father has agreed to my cattle, so the girl is mine whether she likes it or not."

Sindiga was quite decided that he would never marry under circumstances of such a nature. It was most improbable, he thought, that any girl would dream of refusing *him*, but if she did, it would be up to her parents to look for cattle elsewhere!

Not being at all sure that the mad elder's daughter would present the same appeal to him which she had in his youth, and having as yet no other girl in mind, he postponed further consideration of this subject and fell to debating within himself why Ondieki should have sent a man to spy on Barongo, and what message or instructions his letter to the herdman may have contained. In view of a certain explanation of Ondieki's behavior which was slowly taking shape in his mind, he renewed his determination immediately upon his return to have Ontegi investigate the contents of the letter he had found.

He was ascending Nyamosaka Hill when he recalled again Ondieki's having used the same opprobrium in his speech with which he had been wont to mock him in their boyhood days—"That son of a Lumbwa." He writhed again when he allowed his mind to dwell on the insult. Would he never know of a surety whether or not he was a true Omogusii born? It meant a lot to him; for either he was the son of Nyambati and Keruo, or else an unfortunate Lumbwa outcast, who would have been murdered but for Nyambati's having either bought or stolen him. It seemed as if he was doomed never to know the truth. On that never-to-be-forgotten day when he had first distinguished himself as a warrior, he had determined after the battle to press Nyambati to tell him—to ask him straightly whether or not he was his own son, and if so whether or not he could prove it;

to ask him many other questions which he had never had answered to his satisfaction; such as, whether Nyambati himself believed Keruo to be alive or dead? The old man had never spoken directly of Keruo's death, but always simply of her abduction and captivity. But that fight had been Nyambati's last, and the opportunity of interrogating him had never come.

Still pondering these things he stepped onto the mission road. A short cut led past the missionary's house to the school, and thence to the native village where lived Barongo, the son of Kibagendi.

As he strode through the large mission village, Sindiga felt very disdainful of the cotton-clad figures he saw everywhere, but he was careful not to show it. He was sorry for them. Victims of the white man's civilization, they had turned their backs on the customs of their race; and since the society into which they had entered did not admit of equalities, and black men could not hope to rule, they were henceforth to be counted slaves.

There was but one entrance to Barongo's hut, and this was closed by a wooden door that swung on iron hinges—an improvement on the old wicker stop-gaps used by the majority of the Abagusii. Suddenly, just as Sindiga came up to it, this door opened, and from behind it stepped, not Barongo, but Ondieki himself. He was wearing, besides a cotton shirt and shorts, a good quality woolen blanket; his eyes were bloodshot, and he walked with the gait of a drunken man.—Christians and unschooled Abagusii enjoy at least one thing in common, thought Sindiga: both alike appreciate their beer. —Then his arm shot out and he took hold of Ondieki by the shoulder.

"What are you doing *here*?" he demanded.

"What are *you* doing here, you mean!" Ondieki unhesitatingly flashed back. "Some mischief, I'll warrant. Let go! Christians are not answerable to savages!"

Sindiga's arm fell to his side. How could he possibly deny Ondieki's last assertion? Who was he to interfere with a Christian visiting a Christian? Ondieki and Barongo were both civilized; they belonged to one community; and he, Sindiga, was an outsider and an intruder in their village.

"Fool!" exclaimed Ondieki, and left him standing there, irresolute and angry—but his irresolution did not last long. His right of entry into the mission village was his friendship with Barongo.

He knocked on the door of the hut, but there was no answer from within.

As he waited there, something happened which lent impetus to a world of conjectures beginning to assail him with regard to Ondieki's possible business with Barongo. A lean, long figure, clad in a tattered goat-skin which did poor service as a garment, stepped out from the rear of a hut and barred Ondieki's way. He wore a necklace composed of beads and shells, and oddments of brass, iron, and wood, and from his bulgy forehead there protruded a pair of wild boar tusks. From a leather string encircling his waist dangled several bunches of cents, and a little dirty fragment of cloth which looked as if it contained shillings.[1]

Sindiga immediately recognized this weird-looking individual as one of the few and universally hated witch-doctors who had invaded Gusii since Nyambati's day. He saw him stretch out a lank, muscular arm and grip Ondieki's shoulder. Ondieki resented the familiarity, and expostulated so vehemently about his shirt getting soiled that the old man let go and contented himself with waving an impatient hand in his direction. With the other he slapped the bunches of cents at his side so ferociously that Sindiga, watching the two of them,

[1] Shillings succeeded rupees and florins as the legal tender of Kenya Colony. There are a hundred cents to a shilling, which is the approximate equivalent of an American quarter.

could have no doubt as to the nature of the controversy. Clearly the medicine-man wanted payment for some service rendered, and the other was loath to pay. The question that came immediately to Sindiga's mind was: had Ondieki's dealings with a man who sold poisons for a living any evil portent for his friend Barongo?

He was still watching the pair from under the eaves of Barongo's hut when a deep-toned but pleasant-sounding voice accosted him.

"Did you wish to see Barongo?"

Sindiga turned and looked hard at his questioner; then he drew his breath in astonishment, for before him, clad in civilized attire, stood a big Nyaribari—the very man who, in the days before the coming of the white men, had saved the captive Barongo from an untimely death. Kibagendi's son and he had crossed the border in search of Muraa's cattle, but Barongo had been captured. Sindiga recalled exactly how he had seen this Nyaribari stand, as with an imperious gesture he had bidden Barongo make good his escape from Nyanchwa Hill, and how the armed warriors accompanying him had loudly signified their assent.

The man had changed little except in regard to his attire. Sindiga thought he detected some slight modifications in the contour of his lips, and possibly in his carriage, but that was all.

"My name is John Neko," he volunteered. "I was one of the first Nyaribaris to come to the mission, and being Barongo's teacher I happen to know where he is. He had to leave this morning to go and see his father, Kibagendi, over a matter of some importance, and we do not expect him back for a day or two."

Sindiga thanked him. "Barongo was a friend of mine before the white men came," he explained. "We are both sons of Manga in Kitutu. When I saw Ondieki come out of the house here, I made sure Barongo would be at home."

"Who is Ondieki?" the Nyaribari asked. "I did not know Barongo had a friend by that name."

Sindiga pointed with his chin. "See.—Is he not a Christian of this mission?"

John Neko looked in the direction indicated, and Sindiga noticed that he frowned as he did so; but presently he laughed—a rich, mellow laugh that bespoke good nature. "*He* a Christian! No, no! Less of one than yourself, I should say!"—saying which, he gave Sindiga an earnest, friendly look which made him momentarily uncomfortable. "I think that you, perhaps, would be easier to win than he. The love of money has captured him, and he is as much out of your reach as ours; for he cares not a whit more for Gusii tradition than for Christianity. I have had to do with him before, and know him for an enemy of honest men. He dresses like one of us and often professes to believe what we believe, but he has never spent more than a week at one time in a mission school. What *he* should want with Barongo I don't know."

Sindiga listened in profound amazement. This genial Nyaribari was upsetting all his preconceived notions of Christianity. Could it be that there was something incompatible between civilization, as exemplified in Ondieki, and Barongo's Christianity? And could it be that the love of money was as hateful to Christians as to lovers of Gusii tradition? It was an arresting thought—the mere possibility!

All this time Ondieki was arguing hotly with the now thoroughly excited medicine-man. The latter was waving one of the dirty bunches of cents in Ondieki's face with every evidence of complete dissatisfaction.

"I'm a poor man," he cried, raising a querulous voice to its highest pitch.—They were the first words which had reached Sindiga's ear.

"So am I, and I can't afford to pay you so much," responded the clothed one, likewise raising his voice.

If Ondieki disgusted John Neko, the medicine-man disgusted Sindiga more. Parading as a genuine Omogusii he yet cared as much for the white man's money as Ondieki himself and did not care how he obtained it. Sindiga, indignant at the hypocrisies of his day, hardly knew which of the two he scorned most—the profit-hunting professor of Christianity or the crooked, unscrupulous savage, who brought discredit on the customs of his tribe by an illicit traffic in poisons. What shocked and nauseated Sindiga most was the surface religion of the one and the pretense of the other to patriotism: for all medicine-men, in company with the bribe-taking chiefs and headmen, claimed to be examples of patriotic fervor.

He turned away from watching the disputants and shook John Neko's hand.—"I must be going," said he. "Watch Ondieki."

"Travel in peace," said John Neko; and so they parted.

Sindiga was regretful at not having seen Barongo, but he started on the return journey with the cheerful resignation of a typical Kaffir. As it had happened, so doubtless it had been appointed.

Passing by the swamp towards sundown he observed that but ten cattle reposed on the hillside where twice that number had grazed earlier in the day. This meant that Ondieki's matrimonial affairs were progressing, but of course it offered no new clue as to his business with Barongo. Ontegi's halting translation of Ondieki's letter that evening told a lot more.

Of course, the letter had not been written by the person whose name was subscribed at the bottom of it, for, as John Neko had said, Ondieki had never set himself seriously to learn to read or write. Either he was wealthy enough to employ a clerk, or else he had secured the services of some student at the mission. Like the majority of letters written by natives in Ki-

Swahili, it was brief; and—*unlike* the majority—it happened to be to the point. Thus it read:—

15, Fevuary, 1925.

To Omwenga the son of Ochieng.

Peace!

The "big bwana" has helped me. Send over the cattle without further delay. Nothing else matters. The girl has followed Barongo to the mission, but we will get her away without difficulty.

Enough! I am your brother,

Ondieki, son of Bogunko.

XIV

"BARONGO'S GIRL"

THE MORROW FOUND SINDIGA SETTING OUT ONCE again for the village of the Christians on Nyanchwa Hill, this time driven by a determination to frustrate Ondieki's plans and so render his friend a valuable service; for, said he to himself, without a doubt Ondieki and Barongo are rivals in love. And the girl?—the dark-eyed daughter of old Zakawa of course; for had not Ondieki referred to his having once cared for her himself? He was certain he had never given a moment's thought to any other maiden. If she had followed Barongo to the mission, he argued, she had probably done so at his express invitation and promise of protection; for in Gusii a girl who leaves her home, discards her goat-skin for cotton raiment, and attends a mission school, stands sorely in need of some protection. She inevitably incurs the displeasure not only of her parents but of the whole clan. She becomes in very truth "a stranger in a strange land," liable to be seized, when found, by any one of her relatives, thrashed for her insubordination, and returned to her parents for further punishment. If she repeatedly runs away, heedless of the wrath of her parents, they may, eventually, consent to her learning to read, or even to her marrying a mission adherent—in such a case they will sometimes turn right round and urge this upon her for fear of losing the cattle dowry! But because every girl is anxious to fetch a good price upon marriage, very few gainsay their parents' wishes,

and the proportion of girls and women to men in the churches is small.

Knowing the foregoing facts, Sindiga presumed that the girl would seek refuge in the mission boarding school, and there hold out against marrying Ondieki until Barongo procured cattle sufficient to pay for her. Parents and relatives would obtain interviews with her there, and alternately persuade and threaten with all the eloquence they were capable of. If she held out, her affection for Barongo and her powers of resolution would certainly be tried to the uttermost, and if Ondieki had a scheme for luring her away or getting her away by force, Sindiga felt that either she or Barongo should be forewarned of his intentions.

In this respect the positions of men and women differ greatly in East Central Africa. Men who, in opposition to their parents' wishes, take up the study of the Christian religion, are sometimes disinherited, but as a general rule the male members of a household enjoy a latitude and freedom in following their inclinations that no girl or woman ever attains to. Women are regarded merely as *property*, and there are no evidences as yet that the Government as a whole objects to this form of female servitude; instead polygamy, which gave birth to it, is sanctioned and even encouraged. Many administrators who do not really approve of polygamy, as "custodians of native interests" consider themselves bound to support the wishes of the native elders in regard to such matters. The majority of the women themselves are quite indifferent. They are used to their position and believe in making the best of things. To them also, "whatever is, is best." And so they continue to be the property of their parents until marriage, after which they become the property of their husbands. They take pleasure in considering themselves valuable property, and after marriage work hard to prove that they are worth the price paid for them; and so long as

they avoid mixing with Christians they rarely feel unpleasantly conscious of subjection. If they work hard, bear children, observe the customs of their tribe, and avoid sickness, they live tolerably happy, care-free lives; but the moment they start to think for themselves—which is not customary—they make rods for their own backs. That a girl or a woman should embrace the white man's religion is regarded as a sign that she is morally degenerate, lacking in filial respect, and—if married—devoid of wifely affection. Every effort is made to reclaim such a one, by threatenings, persuasion, and harsher means—chiefly the latter.

Sindiga knew that if Ondieki could succeed in getting Barongo's girl away from the mission he would have the sympathy of not a few patriotic Abagusii to shield him, besides probably the approval of the girl's parents. He took it for granted that the man would go to any lengths in order to gain his ends. It was because Sindiga knew that Ondieki could be quite unscrupulous when his personal interests were at stake that, as soon as he grasped the drift of Ondieki's letter to the herdman, he resolved to constitute himself the girl's protector in Barongo's absence.

He had cared for the girl once himself, but he experienced no pangs of jealousy to think of her in connection with another. It was friendship for Barongo—not chivalry for the fairer sex nor love for the girl—that urged him on. He found pleasure in contemplating Barongo as a lover. As far as his own matrimonial affairs were concerned, one girl was as good as another—provided she could hoe, and cook, and draw water, and chop firewood, bear him children, and hold her tongue whenever he happened to be in a cantankerous mood.—Nyambati's son was a savage, and all savages regard women as merchandise. One made the best bargain one could, and then set about training the girl in the way she should go, much as one would an ox

or a donkey. Zakawa's dark-eyed daughter had, in the dim and distant past, robbed him of his common sense and made him somewhat sentimental; but having passed through the fires of love and become hardened in the process, he would be the better able to help and advise his friend.

With thoughts similar to these passing through his mind, he proceeded gaily on his way, running a good part of the distance and arriving at the mission in record time.

A dozen or more native paths connected the mission village with the European settlement and the rest of Gusii, but Sindiga, like many others, always made a point of choosing the path which led past the missionary's house and through his garden. On the occasion of his first visit he had seen a European lady doctoring a small boy's cut finger; so far, he had thought, so good, but he hoped that some day he might catch a glimpse of her actually at *work*. He was positively keen on catching a white woman at work, for he had recently been told that they never did any, and he wanted to verify this statement. Then, too, the white man's garden interested him immensely. Never supposing that a man would dream of planting anything in his garden that was not good to eat, he wondered what sort of food the rose trees bore, and marveled at the array of flowers on what he supposed was the white man's greens. He surmised that the avenue of Gravillea Robusta lining the drive would yield simply terrific crops of food in the course of time, and thought it a pity goats were not allowed to graze on the green lawns!

It never occurred to Sindiga that to stand for half an hour gazing in at the windows of a white man's house, in the hope of seeing its occupant, was impolite. An Omogusii would come out and greet a visitor, black or white, who showed an interest in his or her abode! Nor did Nyambati's son suppose that he was intruding

unduly upon the privacy of a European when he chose to walk observantly through his back garden. Wherever a path existed, so far as he knew, there was a right of way—except, of course, where a carpet of thorns, or an armed native policeman, was there to warn trespassers off.

So Sindiga took the shortest route, and as usual kept his eyes wide open. He peered here and there between the trees, but seeing no white woman working in the garden, concluded that his informants were correct; obviously white women were excused from work. He walked up the drive behind a crowd of natives as engrossed in everything as himself. At the same time he hurried, took in everything with an alert eye, and did not halt until he reached the red brick house where lived the missionary and his wife.

A crowd of excited young men in cotton clothing were gathered around the door, and the white man was addressing them in Ekegusii. Sindiga, as a matter of course, listened to catch every word spoken.

"No, John. You had no right at all to interfere. Respect for parents is the first commandment with promise, and they doubtless need the girl's help on their gardens."

A chorus of voices struck in: "No, sir! Hoeing is finished and there is no more work to be done till sowing time. That was merely an excuse to get her away. Even if there were still work to do she should not have been dragged away like that. The sight, sir, filled us with indignation and sorrow! There is not the slightest chance of her being allowed to attend the outschool at her home, not even for a couple of hours a day. She came here for protection."

"If she returns," answered the European, "I shall not drive her away—although that is what I am instructed to do in this letter, you know," and he pointed to a

letter he held in his hand. It had come from the District Commissioner's office the day before, and read:

Sir,

Bearer states that his daughter is at your Mission attending school without his consent. Please return the girl to his custody and see that under no circumstances she returns, except by permission of her lawful guardians.

Signed: Major P. Q————,
for the District Commissioner.

Sindiga divined easily enough that the missionary's sympathies were with the girl and her defenders, but that some higher authority had insisted on the girl being delivered over.

Bitterly the native Christians made reply: "She will never come back. You are a white man, and do not know the ways and means the Abagusii have of breaking a girl's spirit."

"Listen," said the white man authoritatively. "The Government does not wish to rule in place of the chiefs, but merely to give effect to their decisions—to enforce, that is, the laws framed by your chiefs and elders in consultation together. If your laws are bad—if what you say is true that they work hardship and cruelty, and help perpetuate ignorance—you must prevail upon the old men, your rulers, to repeal them."

"What can we do?" came in a chorus from the group; and one young man answering for the rest, said: "Do you suppose the old men will listen to us—to men, whom they regard as despisers of their authority, who take pride in acknowledging themselves the subjects of King George of England, and who rejoice in the white man's religion? No, sir! If we go to them, they say, 'You have gone over to the white men: if they will not protect their own, how can you expect *us*, whose ancient tradition and wise counsel you disregard, any more to interest ourselves in your affairs?'"

Sindiga turned away. During the disputation he had

manifested only the casual interest of a passer-by, but his eyes had traveled understandingly from one to another of the group and back again to the white man. He ventured now a casual inquiry as to the direction taken by the girl's captors. Having ascertained this he slipped away unnoticed, more interested now in rescuing Barongo's girl from Ondieki than in rescuing Barongo from the Christians.

Two things were clear to Sindiga. Firstly, that Ondieki had succeeded in getting the girl away from the mission, just as he had schemed to do; and secondly, that it had been done through the instrumentality of one or both of her parents. He presumed that together the girl's father and Ondieki had gone to the District Commissioner and objected to the girl attending school. Armed with a letter from him, they had presented themselves at the mission and demanded that the girl be handed over. The missionary had given in, and she had been forced to accompany Ondieki against her will, the father approving with an eye to the price he had been paid for her.

In his surmisings Sindiga was correct. As soon as Ondieki and the girl's father had succeeded in getting the girl away from the mission, they had fallen to bargaining over her. She had been delivered over to Ondieki finally by her father, who before parting with her had urged her in conciliatory tones not to give her husband any trouble, but to have respect to the handsome price that had been paid for her. There was one thing, however, Sindiga was in absolute ignorance of; namely, that someone besides himself was on Ondieki's track, bent on upsetting his honeymoon and bringing him back to the township, there to account for certain deceptions whereof he had been found guilty by the Administration. The fact of the matter was that Ondieki had lied to the District Commissioner in order to procure from him the more easily a warrant for the

delivery of the girl. Among other things he had declared that the cattle had been paid over a couple of years previously, and that *ipso facto* she had become his wife and property. She had run away from him, he had explained, for no reason at all. He was perfectly willing to take his cattle back if she wished to marry another, but until they were in this way properly divorced, or until she came to her senses and returned to him, she ought to remain with her people rather than hide herself at the mission. The girl's father had stood by Ondieki in his deception, but subsequently the lie had been discovered and the magistrate had promptly sent an *askari*[1] after the plaintiff to bring him back; not that he had any idea of reversing his decision with regard to the return of the girl to her parents, but like all administrators he profoundly objected to being lied to. By the time Sindiga left the mission the *askari* had learned of the girl's abduction and was following hard in Ondieki's wake.

Sindiga, ignorant of this fact, ran lightly, swiftly, and with mounting passion along the white man's road—that (to him) broad highway which now connects Kisii Township up with Boguche, Lumbwa, and Masai. He exulted as he felt a fierce anger sweeping through him, allying itself to his warm friendship for Barongo. It was a long time since the blood had thus tingled in his veins at the possibility of a fight with human adversaries; he knew Ondieki would have helpers with him, because in the event of a girl trying to escape it was not the bridegroom's job to run after her, but a task invariably assigned to the young men of his set. Sindiga no longer cared whether he was an outsider or not, nor whether or not the girl's father had himself favored Ondieki's suit. All he really cared about now was that he was Barongo's trusty friend, whereas On-

[1] A Swahili word signifying a native policeman or soldier; a sort of gendarme.

dieki was his friend's rival. He recalled Ondieki's declaration in the railway carriage: "The girl is mine, whether she likes it or not!" and as he pondered these words the savage in him rejoiced exceedingly at the possibility of a contest.

Small boys playing by the wayside gave him all the information he needed. They were quite accustomed to seeing girls and women dragged and pushed along the highway by savage men, and cuffed, and beaten, and knocked down: it was, in all probability, the spice of life to them. They told Sindiga that the girl and her captors had passed that way only a short time previously. There were three men—one carrying a spear, and two armed with hippopotamus-hide whips. She had struggled desperately to break away from them, and once she had succeeded; but the men had chased and caught her, and one had slashed her with his whip. Finally she had given up struggling.

Sindiga came into sight of the Kuja River, the three men, and the captive girl at the same time. He had just climbed the high ridge which divided Nyaribari from Boguche, when the four emerged from the bush together, three hundred yards or so ahead of him. They were traveling slowly, the men doubtless congratulating themselves on having quelled the rebellious instincts of their comely prisoner.

Sindiga, keeping hidden in the bush, strove to get near enough to the four to recognize them without being seen himself. Beyond noticing that the girl was considerably taller than he had expected her to be, he scarcely regarded her at all; but he scrutinized the faces of her captors carefully one by one. He had half expected old Zakawa to be there, but there was no one even faintly resembling him. He concluded that having helped get his daughter away from the mission, and accepted the cattle paid for her, the old man doubtless felt that his responsibility was at an end.

Ondieki was the only man whom Sindiga recognized; he was the only one not attired in skins. Besides the ornament of a large spear, he carried a pair of shiny brown boots—too exclusively a mere decoration to allow of their being worn on a journey.

Still keeping out of sight, Sindiga watched the bridal procession. He heard Ondieki say something to one of the men which occasioned a loud laugh. The fact that his joke was well received perceptibly increased the bridegroom's swagger. Presently he ventured to sidle up to the captive, and to place a caressing hand upon her shoulder. What happened next drew from Sindiga an involuntary shout of approbation and indignant cries from Ondieki's friends.

"Snake!" cried the girl, and wheeling suddenly round upon Ondieki, she slapped him soundly across the mouth. Before he or his accomplices could recover from their surprise, she had knocked the spear out of Ondieki's hand with another expression of contempt, and fled away down the hillside. It was a most unheard-of thing for a Gusii girl so to deal with a man—but for a man to make love to a girl so freely on the highway was also a serious breach of Gusii etiquette. Any elderly native would, without a shadow of doubt, have conceded that Ondieki got what he richly deserved.

"Fools! Why did you let her get away like that?" exclaimed Ondieki, and promptly gave chase, followed by his men.

It did not take Sindiga a second to perceive that the girl could run; but Ondieki could run too. She ran like the wind—he like a furious wild bull. His companions dashed after him with a maximum amount of noise, shaking their whips and capering wildly as they went.

The moment Sindiga had waited for had arrived. He too could run, and he shot forward as promptly as a bullet from a white man's gun.

Very quickly he lessened the distance between himself and the hindermost ruffian. He was rapidly catching up with him when a woman, with a basket of grain upon her head, approached from an opposite direction. The fact that this woman made no attempt to move out of the line of pursuit, but continued calmly on her course as though careless whether she was knocked down or not, surprised Sindiga not a little; so that, as he ran, he watched her, wondering all the while at her folly. Barongo's girl swerved from the path to avoid her. Then suddenly Sindiga grasped the fact that the woman had not held to her course without a purpose. He saw her put her basket down and deliberately hurl herself in front of the soothsayer's son; and ere Sindiga could reach the spot, or satisfy himself concerning a notion which was forming in his mind as to the identity of this fair champion of her sex, she had torn Ondieki's fine coat almost off his back in a brave effort to stay his progress, and had been thrown violently to the ground.

This was no more than Sindiga had expected as soon as he had divined her intentions. The woman herself could scarcely have expected gentler treatment at the hands of the irate bully she had dared to intercept; but she had impeded his progress, which was all she had hoped to do. Her courageous action called forth a second shout from Sindiga, which caused the man just ahead of him to delve hastily into the bush. Nyambati's son was too quick for him, however. Taking one great leap, he landed so squarely on the rascal's back that the impact carried them both completely off their feet. Sindiga took time to punish the man drastically with a few lightning blows delivered about his head and ribs, and was about to leap to his feet when a voice he could not fail to recognize arrested him in the act.

"Keep down—*down*!" it called.

Sindiga obeyed the voice and kept down, and well it was for him that he did so. A spear, thrown with precision, sang through the air above him, missing his head by half a hand's breadth.—The woman who had dared to bar Ondieki's way had undoubtedly saved his life; and the voice which had called to him in time was the voice of his own sister Nyakiage.

Leaving the spear where it had buried itself quivering in the sod, Sindiga sprang up. Then, ordering the man to lie where he was, and backing his command with another fierce blow, he ran forward to his sister's side.

To say that she was astonished to recognize her brother would be to describe her sensations very much more mildly than she, in her own forceful language, would have done.

"Eh! But it is really you, Sindiga?" she exclaimed, and kept reiterating, "I knew it not, oh, I knew it not! I thought you were just a brave man—some enemy of Ondieki's, or perhaps a rival. Good, good! But run now —stop him! He is drunk, or mad. Stop him before he works the girl mischief!"

Sindiga did not require a second bidding. Ondieki had recognized him. On no other person would he have attempted to wreak so dire a revenge. His attempt to work Sindiga bodily injury had been foiled, but he would not easily allow himself to be foiled a second time. Waiting but a moment to watch the flight of his spear, he had recommenced his pursuit of the girl as soon as he saw it hit the turf. Far down the hillside Sindiga saw him running, and ahead of him, like a dazzling flower in the grass, the girl in her white cotton dress. A wind was springing up, and borne along on it came the sound of falling water. It was the falls—those falls on the Kuja River, of which he had heard. Nyanguka, he knew, lived somewhere in their vicinity, and in all probability Nyakiage had just left her home and was on her way to the market on Bigendi Hill when

she met Ondieki. Sindiga, ignoring the path, plunged directly down the hill slope, catching fleeting glimpses of the falls as he ran. He observed with dismay that Barongo's girl made directly for the high dam of rocks over which the turbulent waters madly plunged. Her intentions were obvious, and so good a start had she that he almost despaired of hindering her in her project.

The man he had thrashed lay where he had fallen, emitting loud groans. The other accomplice was running hard in Ondieki's wake, with the dual purpose of proving his loyalty to the bridegroom and saving his own skin. Sindiga soon caught him up, and snatching the hippopotamus-hide whip from his hand, administered it thrice with vigor, daring the man to stir thence at the peril of further chastisement; taking due note of Sindiga's flashing eyes and muscular frame, the man fell back and thereafter contented himself with shouting sundry pieces of advice to Ondieki.

Sindiga ran as he had never run in his life before, but was forced to the conclusion at last that he could not overtake the girl in time to save her from the end she sought, even though he should overtake Ondieki. He shouted, but it was of no avail; she but ran the more swiftly. Apparently she had made her choice between two evils, and was not to be turned from it.

She reached the river's brink and stepped out onto the rocky ledge above the falls. Her would-be champion and her hated adversary together saw her stand for one moment, motionless and erect, on the verge of the roaring white cataract, and then leap with a wild cry and arms upflung into the cold embrace of the swirling waters. At that very instant, out from the bush that clothed the banks of the river, sprang a figure wearing the blue tunic and red cap of a native policeman.—He had been running, and was obviously unaware that anything out of the ordinary had happened.

Briskly he commanded the soothsayer's son to halt,

and Ondieki—having respect for the "fire-weapon" the *askari* carried—humbly obeyed.

The policeman then addressed Sindiga. "Stand where you are," he ordered, "and tell me the names of those two men." As he said this he pointed to them native fashion, with his chin.

Sindiga stood, and looking in the direction indicated, observed that Ondieki's companions were making off as fast as their legs could carry them.

"I do not know their names, *bwana*," he said.

"Your name?"

"Sindiga, son of Nyambati."

"What's your business with Ondieki, son of Bogunko the soothsayer?"

Sindiga but half heard the question; he was gazing gloomily in the direction of the falls.

"The girl ——" he stammered. "She foiled him—gave him a run for nothing! But to drown herself that way—with a man like Barongo wanting her!—*Askari*, you were half minute too late!"

"Drowned herself!" exclaimed the *askari*. "Why, you don't mean to say . . . ?"

"Yes, just that. She leapt over the fall just as you stepped in front of Ondieki there."

The native policeman shook his head solemnly. "The girls of today don't know what filial affection is," he pronounced. "You tried to stop her?"

"I certainly did," Sindiga assured him. "Wait here for me," he added, his countenance brightening suddenly. "There is just a chance that the river will object to drowning her. I have heard of such things happening. Wait just a minute—I will come back."

He was moving off when Ondieki found his tongue: "She was my wife," he protested. "Stop him—let me go myself."

The *askari* had no mind to consent to Ondieki's proposal. "No, *bwana*," he replied energetically, and his

use of the appellation was extremely ironical. "If the whirlpool there has her you will neither of you see her again. Nevertheless you," he added, addressing Sindiga, "go and investigate. If you find her body, report it to the headman of Boguche who will see to burying her." Turning to his prisoner he commanded: "You come with me. You are wanted by the *Bwana Mkubwa*.[2] Just go along in front."

Ondieki, once more a captive, did as he was bidden; but he experienced no qualms of apprehension such as had been his on that day long ago when the Lumbwa raiders had surprised him at his father's kraal. He walked this time with undejected mien. Did he not know the white man's ways? Did he not know that a lengthy trial preceded every sentence? that a man was innocent until actually proved guilty, and that even imprisonment was nothing to be dreaded? The white man might shout at him, but "his bark was worse than his bite." As for his escort, the *askari*, Ondieki knew he would no more think of treating a prisoner as did those cowardly Lumbwas than of insulting the Commissioner himself.—Although Ondieki dared not take the risk, he rather imagined that even if he ran away the *askari* would satisfy himself with merely reporting the fact.

Sindiga, observing Ondieki's indifferent air, could not fail to contrast the white man's rule with their own savage methods of government. The white men, in his opinion, were soft—altogether too soft. Lawlessness was increasing with the multiplicity of laws; morality was talked about more and practiced less than before the white man came. Worst of all, now that intertribal wars had ceased, individuals old and young lived chiefly to exploit their brethren; and the Government did nothing to put a stop to it.

After a long but fruitless search along the river banks,

[2] "Great chief," or one having authority; in this case the District Commissioner.

Sindiga returned to find the neighborhood of the falls deserted. He had hoped his sister would wait for him, but she was not to be seen. Presuming that she too was hunting for some trace of Barongo's girl along the banks of the river, and that she would soon return, he sat down on a rock by the falls to wait; but he expected her to return as disappointed and chagrined as himself.

Bitterly he lamented his failure to effect the rescue. Had he succeeded, Barongo would have been more in his debt than in that of the white man, who had not scrupled to hand over the girl to a heartless father. Rebelliously he reflected on the fact that it now would fall to him to have to carry the evil tidings back to his friend. He who found so much pleasure in being a carrier of good news—a teller of good words—would have to describe a most miserable tragedy to one whom he loved as his own soul.

He sat for a long time looking down at the falls, heedless of the fact that the sky had clouded over, and a tempestuous wind, cold from off the great Mau Escarpment, east of Manga, was moaning down the valley, driving the spray in his face and the last brown *omotembe* leaves to earth. Unobservant as he was of these things, Dame Nature's changing moods never failed to affect him, and on this occasion they did so more than usual. The sudden overshadowing of her face helped to darken his thoughts and wither what remaining hope he had of Barongo's girl ever turning up alive. The Kaffir's faculty for making the most of life, his habitual merry deportment and characteristic carelessness, have often been commented on: perhaps few realize what depths of sadness his soul is capable of descending to at times. His ability to put himself in another's place is something extraordinary, and he will often experience distressing throes of anguish for a friend in trouble.

In proportion to the number of Christian young men the number of Christian girls in Gusii were few, and Sindiga knew that the untimely death of Barongo's prospective bride would probably interfere with his friend's getting married for a considerable time to come. As Sindiga reflected on this fact, and on the girl's devotion in following her suitor to the mission, he sorrowed heavily for Barongo. Strange to say, he pondered less the girl's tragic fate than Barongo's bereavement. Notwithstanding his virtues, he was but a savage, with no more than a savage's regard for women. Nevertheless, death was sufficiently terrible whether it happened to man or maid, and by degrees he began to sorrow for her too.

There at the edge of the falling water he gave the reins to melancholy. He began to imagine himself in the embrace of those cold waters, and to wonder what death was like. The storm clouds gathered, accentuating his gloom. He could not but doubt that the girl had been drowned. It occurred to him that if her dead body was found at all by man—near the margin of the river, on the rocks or in the reeds—it would be interred by strangers where it was found, instead of by relatives in the sacred soil of Kitutu. If not found it would without a doubt be devoured by wild beasts.

The Abagusii observe strange customs with regard to their dead. The body of a drowned person, unless claimed by near-by relatives, is almost invariably buried at the river's brink. A goat is killed as a sacrifice to the spirits, and eaten there on the spot; then all who have had anything to do with the burial or the finding of the body, bind on their middle fingers strips of hide. If an unknown man is found dead by the roadside, a leafy twig is thrown upon the body by every passer-by, lest the dead man's spirit should think: "That person passed me by as though I were not a man." But with the exception of individuals struck by lightning, whose bodies

are supposed to attract the lightning to kill others, all known dead are buried in the vicinity of their homes, the men inside the cattle enclosures and the women outside. Not to have a decent burial is regarded by the Abagusii as a tragic fate, indeed.

Sindiga's mind traveled slowly from the girl to the death rites of his tribe, and from these back to the girl; and all the while there sounded in his ears the monotonous and depressing roar of the falls—loud, challenging, awful. He had been sitting thus nearly an hour when a leather skirt flapped behind him, and a voice said: "Sindiga, my child! Brother—son of Nyambati; so here you are in Gusii!—Say, are you well?"

Sindiga started, and looking round beheld his sister, standing with her arms akimbo and her head tilted to one side studying him affectionately. She was the picture of her mother Kinanga. He stood and surveyed her appreciatively.

"Eh! But I'm glad you have come back, sister," he declared, gripping her proffered hand. He shook it with vigor, feeling that the occasion merited more enthusiasm than could possibly have been read into the tone of his voice. "But where have you been," he questioned, "and were you not badly hurt when you fell?"

"The fall did not hurt me," Nyakiage replied. "I saw Nyamwita was making for the falls, and tried hard to intercept her by taking a shorter path than either of you."

"Nyamwita—that was her name then?"

"Why, yes, have you forgotten?"

Sindiga had either never taken the trouble to learn the name of Zakawa's black-eyed daughter, or else he had forgotten it with but little effort as soon as his matrimonial suit came to an end. Nyamwita, however, was quite a common name in Gusii, and he reflected that it might have been that as easily as any other.—He had known scores of Nyamwitas. Feeling ashamed

of his ignorance, he answered his sister's question evasively.

"I very nearly had forgotten," he said.

Nyakiage's next remark took him by surprise. "Maybe you think she is dead—quite drowned?"

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Tell me quickly."

"You needn't look at me like that," she replied. "Listen! I reached this spot while you were being detained by the *askari*, and leaning over I saw the foolish girl fighting for her life in the rapids below the whirlpool." Nyakiage pointed to a dam of black rocks reaching far out into the current. "I saw her reach those rocks and scramble up onto them, and there she lay for a little while quite still. She was dazed, I saw, but neither stunned nor drowned. Presently she climbed up onto the bank yonder and ran into the bushes weeping. There is a bridge of logs and interlaced branches lower down by which I crossed the river and finally reached her. I tried to persuade her to come home with me, but she refused, saying she would go straight back to the mission; for she believes that the white man's God saved her both from her pursuers and the water."

"Maybe He did," commented Sindiga, and subsequently marveled at himself.—His conception of God was changing. Formerly he had thought of the Great Spirit vaguely as the "Creator"—a being utterly aloof from and devoid of interest in the affairs of individuals. But long ago he had come to the conclusion that this Being entertained a special interest in Barongo, and apparently exercised a greater influence over him than even he, Sindiga, did. Was it not possible that to strengthen His hold on Barongo He, and no other, had intervened and saved the girl from her fate?

When Nyakiage said she supposed he would want to see Nyanguka, Sindiga answered her abstractedly. He could not at once shake off the pall of melancholy

under which his spirit had been languishing, and the thought of an omnipotent God as His rival was in itself depressing! Clouds had blotted out the sunshine as far as he could see, and the wind was colder than ever. He began to be conscious of this fact even to the point of resenting it. Even now that he was assured of the girl's safety, the coöperation of the elemental forces of nature seemed necessary to bring him back thoroughly to himself.

As he followed Nyakiage along the narrow pathway which led to Nyanguka's kraal, the memory of his own bereaved condition came back to him, together with a sense of great loneliness, and from sorrowing over his friend's loss he fell to envying him his felicity. A few heavy drops of rain fell; the nimbus above blackened; cows lowed uneasily, and a boisterous wind hustled them on their way.

The rainy season was exceptionally late that year, and hundreds of Gusii women had, but a few days previously, made a great demonstration in front of the District Commissioner's house because of it. In the olden days, when the rains delayed unreasonably at sowing time, all the women of the tribe would discard their leather garments and drape themselves with leafy creeping plants; thus attired, and in numbers resembling a formidable army, they would go up and down the country chanting their demands for rain. The thunder of their feet as they danced could be heard for miles. If a rain-maker promised rain and it came in a reasonably short time, he became exceedingly popular, but received no payment; as a rule, however, when it was rumored in the ears of the professed rain-makers that the women were on the war-path, they forsook their homes and fled; their habitations were set fire to, and if they dared to show themselves they not infrequently received sound corporal punishment into the bargain.—The Government had offered objections to these drastic

old-time methods; and so, said all the womenfolk, it was up to the Government to see that the rains came punctually. Whatever may have been promised, the white residents of Kisii Township will not soon forget the sight of the women parading in front of the administrative headquarters and the sound of their voluminous chant.

The atmosphere had been hot and oppressive for several afternoons in succession. Sindiga had noted the vast white blanket of cloud behind the drifting billows of cumulus daily extending its dominion across the sky from east to west, till at last it had met the banked-up clouds behind the Gwasi Hills. The rainy season was upon them.

Suddenly, unpresaged by minor rumbles, a terrific thunderclap rent the air. Simultaneously a blinding flash of lightning lit up the bush for a single instant; hills and valleys, by contrast, seemed plunged in gloom. The landscape before the wayfarers was blotted out with a deluge of hail and rain, and heavy clouds enveloped the hilltops. The air grew colder, and Sindiga, bracing himself to withstand the shock of the rain on his bare limbs, suddenly forgot his troubles. The earth gave out a sweet fragrance, and pictures of sprouting grain and an abundance of sweet herbs crossed his mental vision. —Life was good, he decided, when all was said and done!

They had climbed up out of a valley and were approaching a large hut when that first brilliant lightning flash occurred. Suddenly the awed face of Nyanguka appeared in the doorway, upturned with a look of condensed interrogation. He stepped outside and was followed by two men, a young girl, and a swarm of children, who all stood and gazed fearfully up at the roof.—It had been struck. The thatch was stripped from one half of it, and on the same side the plaster had been torn from the wall within and without. The sticks rein-

forcing the mud walls were charred, and a fissure had been rent in the ground which ran away from the hut and for some distance along the hardened mud pathway.

Simultaneously with the flash all the occupants of the hut had been thrown to the earth violently. Strange to say, none had suffered the slightest hurt. The two men—near neighbors of Nyanguka's probably—bade the owner of the hut a hasty good-bye and dashed off through the rain in the direction of their own homes, while the young girl martialed the children into an adjoining hut.

There were four huts to the kraal—a sign of Nyanguka's prosperity, for it meant that he had been able to afford three other wives besides Nyakiage.

"Alas, O bird!" exclaimed he, gazing up at the sky and addressing the lightning, "wouldst thou kill me and mine?" Then his eyes, traveling slowly to earth, lit on Sindiga with Nyakiage.

"Kai tah-tah! You, Sindiga lad?" he exclaimed, and seizing him with both hands dragged him eagerly into Nyakiage's hut just as the wall of rain from the valley struck the kraal with all its violence. A young boy resembling Nyakiage followed them through the low doorway: it was Nyambati, their eldest son.

Sindiga soon sensed that Nyanguka was the same jolly, boisterous, sincere man with whom he had been so friendly in the old days of cattle raiding and border warfare. He gripped Sindiga's shoulders and forced him back into his own great wicker chair: then he seated himself on a low stool on the opposite side of the fire, and fell to studying his visitor up and down.

"Son of Nyambati," said he with great solemnity and fervor. "May you never more fall a prey to the white men!"

XV

SINDIGA IS PULLED TWO WAYS

WHILE NYAKIAGE AND HER HUSBAND BUSIED THEMselves over the preparation of the evening meal, Sindiga sat back in Nyanguka's great wicker chair and spread his feet to the blaze of a crackling wood fire. He felt very much at home, and showed it. Nyakiage mixed *wimbi* flour and water into a thick, sticky mass, and stirred it in a cauldron over the fire until it attained the consistency of native bread. The boy Nyambati caught a fat fowl and killed it in the adjoining room; this done, he toasted the head before the blaze while Nyanguka prepared the rest of its anatomy for the pot.

Nyakiage herself had nothing whatever to do with the preparation of the fowl. To have had any part or lot in either the killing or the cooking of it would have meant defilement for her. Fowl are regarded by the women of Kavirondo as unclean, and fit only for the menfolk! Bird flesh of any kind, and eggs, they regard with abhorrence; fowl they absolutely refuse to kill, pluck, or cook "for love or money." "Touch not, taste not," is their unanimous vote on the subject, and if the men want bird flesh they must prepare it themselves. The origin of this female aversion to fowl is lost in "the mists of antiquity," but there are those who believe the men to have been responsible for it, since it is undoubtedly they who benefit by it; for if the women will not eat it, the more there is for the men. Sheep flesh is similarly prohibited by the women of Gusii.

In the course of conversation with his host and hostess, Sindiga soon learned that the little girl he had seen outside the hut with Nyanguka was no other than that honest man's fourth and youngest wife. Only one cow so far had been paid over for her, which accounted for the fact that she still wore the scant attire of an unmarried girl—a small rear goat-skin and but a narrow fringe of leather in front. Although a three months' old baby (her own child) slumbered on the floor of her hut, not until the completion of the marriage ceremony could its mother wear a matron's garb; and when that would be depended on when Nyanguka succeeded in satisfactorily reducing his debt. The girl herself was not loath to have the marriage ordeal deferred. She cared a good deal for Nyanguka, and loved Nyakiage much as she loved her own mother; so long as her man gave no hint of wishing to back out of paying the price he had agreed upon for her, she personally would not have minded dispensing with the marriage ceremony altogether.

Nyakiage, chief wife and "benevolent despot" of the home, ruled her small domain with a tact and firmness worthy of a daughter of the sage Nyambati. She was quite as popular a hostess as her mother Kinanga had been. As she stirred the bread dough over the fire, she explained briefly to her husband the circumstances of her meeting with Sindiga.

Nyanguka listened in amazement. When she had finished he placed a hand affectionately on Sindiga's shoulder.

"You're a true son of Manga!" he exclaimed. "But go steady. Don't mix yourself up any more than you can help with mission folk. I am inclined to fear for you."

Later, over their simple meal (Nyakiage contenting herself with greens and bread), Nyanguka received from Sindiga a detailed account of all that had happened

to him since the day he bade good-bye to the Gusii hills.

The chicken was tough, and the "loaf" of *ugali* huge, but they ate until not a particle of either remained. Had anything been left over it would have been a reflection on the cook, for the Abagusii have a fixed belief that any ordinary mortal can devour a week's food at one sitting if he has a mind to. No matter if thrice the necessary quantity of food has been prepared, it must be eaten—nothing is ever left over.

As a matter of fact, in Africa no one is ever faddy or finicky over his food. The polite stranger eats what is set before him, "asking no questions for conscience' sake." What is good for the community is good also for the individual, and as much as is provided is considered good for the guest. If he does not like it, he must "lump" it—swallow it down, that is, the best way he can, as etiquette demands. To observe the highest possible decorum, one must like it emphatically, with rotating jaws and smacking lips, and the alimentary juices gurgling merrily through the teeth.

Thus ate Sindiga, while his host and hostess beamed graciously upon him in the firelight and smacked their own lips encouragingly. When the meal was over they drank Nyakiage's home-brewed beer, and talked of the "good old days" before the white men came.

Nyanguka professed to notice a considerable change in Sindiga.

"You're thinner than you used to be, lad," he commented. "You've been thinking too much—which is bad. Also you would look better in a goat-skin than you do in that blanket. I'm against blankets."

Sindiga did not justify his apparel by explaining that he had just come from the mission. Instead he averred: "They are warm to the skin."

"Soft clothes for soft skins!" retorted Nyanguka with

warmth. "You're an Omogusii, boy—not a thin-skinned Msungu (white man)!"

"True," assented Sindiga, wincing a little at the thrust. "But let me ask *you* a question," he added after a brief pause. "I see in the corner over there a new hoe. You bought it in the bazaar, did you not?"

"Why, yes," Nyanguka admitted. "Where else can they be procured? Surely you know that the Abagusii no longer do any smelting of iron themselves, and that the old ore beds are overgrown with grass."

"If Gusii hoes were still to be had, would you buy them?"

Nyanguka hesitated—the Abagusii find direct lying difficult. He could not truthfully answer yes, for the native article was inferior to those of European make obtainable at the Indian bazaar. Nevertheless, a negative reply would have sounded unpatriotic; so—"I don't know," he said simply, and stared down at the fire.

"The Abagusii," Sindiga proceeded, "have found that they can buy iron implements cheaper than they can make them, and so today the art of smelting has gone from us."

"Too true!" ejaculated Nyanguka. "And the white men are responsible. They are rapidly spoiling our country!"

In the circumstances Sindiga was not to be tricked into admitting anything of the kind. Instead he went on relentlessly:

"What your tribe fashions not, you buy from the Indian storekeeper, who in turn bought it from the white men; moreover, even if what you desired was obtainable from your own countrymen, you would still buy of strangers because they are the more cunning workmen. Is it not so?"

Nyanguka looked dejected: a native is humiliated by being beaten in an argument, though he can bear being beaten in a bargain with the philosophy of a

stoic. Sindiga knew that he had for the time being silenced his critic, and felt almost sorry for it; but he pressed his point home.

"It comes down to this," he concluded. "If the white men bring into the country useful articles which we cannot make ourselves, we shall buy—and you yourself no less than the rest of us!"

"But, lad," demanded Nyanguka in a distressed voice, "where is it going to end? If the white men offer to sell our children's children bricks, and cement, and sawn timber, and glass, and—oh, lad! motor-cycles, and guns, and milk bottles—will they buy?"

Sindiga thought of Barongo, who had recently invested in a clock and a second-hand push bicycle: "Why, yes," he said, and straightway noticed, reposing on an enamel plate in one corner, a box of matches.—"Certainly!" he added with conviction.

Nyanguka knitted his brows. "Then by and by they will want to make such things for themselves, and they know no more about it than you or I." Being forced to think hard, he had caught a fleeting vision of the inevitable. "To whom will they go for instruction—the missionary, I suppose?"

"To be sure!" put in young Nyambati, who all this time had been gazing up into their faces with rapt attention. "To be sure! At the mission one can learn to make all sorts of things—chairs, and tables, and cupboards, and blackboards; and shirts, and dresses if you're a girl. And you can read all about everything in books, and get to know more and more. Ay, but I'm going to the mission some day!"

"No, you're not!" said his mother very decisively. "You'll stay at home and help *me*."

"You wouldn't be happy at the mission, son," said Nyanguka, shaking his head. "Believe me, the Christians are a bad lot."

"I shall go all the same some day," insisted Nyan-

guka's firstborn; and the three adults shook their heads as much as to say, "The young people of today are hopeless."

Sindiga recalled the words of a certain old man with whom he had conversed by the wayside on the occasion of his first visit to the mission. "Our sons are hungry for knowledge," he had said. Sindiga knew what hunger was: what would not a man risk to satisfy hunger!

They did not pursue the question further, but proceeded to discuss the change in the weather, thunderbolts, roofs, rain-makers, crops, *wimbi* bread, the white man's food, white bread, cotton, wool, and then—having narrowly escaped another collision on the subject of blankets—back to the weather, thunderbolts, and the remaining topics, in much the same order as before.

Nyakiage all this while merely listened, rejoicing quietly over the fact of her brother's return. During his absence she had often longed to see him. A lingering fear still possessed her that maybe he was not her true half-brother; that possibly he was the child of some Lumbwa, bought or stolen by Nyambati to replace the real Sindiga; but however this might be, the Sindiga who sat at her fireside had been her charge as an infant, and she felt almost like a mother towards him. He bore himself like a thoroughbred Kitutu, but did not feature old Nyambati her father. Perhaps he was like his mother—she fancied so—but Keruo had been carried off so very long ago that she found it a hard point to decide. He was tall, and he was handsome; and his speech—there was no question about it—fell like music on her ears. She looked into the fire and remembered how they had played together on the great cliff—he and Mosoti, and Barongo, and Ondieki, with a girl named Nyamwita, herself, and many others. One by one she recalled them. Then her thoughts strayed back to the babe Sindiga, whom she had carried about on her back

as a child. She interrupted her husband just as he was about to make some fresh allusion to blankets:

"Sindiga," she said.

"Aye, Kemunto?"

"May I ask you a question?"

"Why, yes—kai!"

"You won't mind?"

"Why?"

"Sindiga—did you ever learn for sure whether or not Nyambati found Keruo's child? Are you Sindiga really? Did you ever press Nyambati to tell you?"

Nyanguka clapped his hands in dismay at his wife's indiscretion in thus probing an old sore, but Sindiga answered quietly. "No, Kemunto, I never did. I wanted to, but—he died, you know. I believe I am Nyambati's son, but I cannot prove it. I live in the hope of being able to prove it some day. All I know at present is—he loved me as his son."

"Of course, of course!" exclaimed Nyanguka. "Of course, you are Nyambati's son!"

"I'd like to know for sure all the same," rejoined Sindiga; and there the conversation ended.

The storm lasted for a couple of hours. It blotted out the sunset, but as soon as it had passed the stars shone out bright and luminous. There was no moon. Sindiga looked out and saw nothing but stars and fireflies. In his language there was no way of distinguishing between them; both were *chingenangenie.*

"You will stay with us tonight, brother, will you not?" said Nyakiage.

"I'll be glad to," Sindiga replied, replacing a wicker barricade over the hole in the wall which served as a doorway. "The stars are bright enough to travel by, but I would as lief wait until dawn tomorrow."

"Must you leave us so soon as that?"

"Yes. I am concerned for Barongo, and the girl. She said she was going to return to the mission, didn't she?

I shall go and talk to them both, and if possible persuade them to return to their Gusii friends and Gusii tradition."

"They will not listen to you," said Nyakiage.

"Success to you!" said Nyanguka, pitting his faculty for hoping against his fears.

So Sindiga turned in with Nyanguka—who offered no objections to sharing his blanket, by the way—and Nyakiage slept that night with her pretty young rival, the child-mother; but before they retired they went the round of the four huts, with young Nyambati leading the way, and Sindiga made the acquaintance of that sturdy sapling's younger brothers, and half-brothers, sisters and half-sisters, and received invitations from all four of Nyanguka's wives to "come again soon."

At dawn, when he set out, the women and children all came out with their lord and master to bid him a hearty farewell.

As Sindiga hastened on, thinking over his conversations with Nyanguka he came in conflict again with a problem which, originating inconspicuously with his first actual contact with civilization, now began to assume more significant proportions. His hope of saving Barongo "from the error of his ways" was at a rather low ebb, and for no other reason than that his own prejudices against civilization, if not the Christian religion, were being gradually broken down. By slow degrees the truth was dawning upon Sindiga that Christianity and civilization were not one and the same thing; that certain fundamentals of the one were antagonistic to some aspects of the other; that the kind of clothing worn had little to do with the former, and not everything to do with the latter; and that neither modes nor "manners" (i.e., customs) signified. A web of evidence, defensive of civilization and missions was slowly forming in his brain. He had never had any anti-European bias: on the contrary, he had been constrained to respect white men

from the beginning, while objecting to some of their customs. Upon reflection he had to admit that civilization had not made Ondieki what he was. Neither had Christianity spoiled his friend Barongo. Fighting with the lion by Sindiga's side, the son of Kibagendi had not quailed; nor as a Christian did he lack any of those sterling qualities which had bound Sindiga to him in their boyhood days. Ondieki's bias towards evil was as much a part of his nature as was Barongo's instinctive morality. Civilization had not altered their natures; it gave to them both new modes of expression. Thus it came to pass that Sindiga had begun to ask himself: Whence came the Abagusii's hatred of civilization? Whence his own prejudices? He did not weary himself with these questions; instead he dismissed them from his mind as soon as he perceived they were difficult to answer. Slowly and imperceptibly, nevertheless, they were undermining his conservatism.

In about an hour Sindiga struck the white man's road —that terribly broad "parapara" which led over windswept ridges, and down dewy dales to the township, the mission, and the Nyanza. Sindiga had always indulged a hatred for it, but now he began to ask himself—had he a reason? The highways which connected Gusii with the rest of Kavirondo, with Lumbwa, and Masai, had facilitated intertribal trade. That really was a good thing—Sindiga could not deny it. Trade was good, he said to himself, but not trade with money—they were not used to it; it upset their communal life and gave men like Ondieki undue power and influence. Since its advent they had seen (in the words of a Luo proverb) "the foolish thing grasping the wise thing," and old men abased before their offspring. Money might be all right for white men, but it was bad for black people—for the great majority of black people; he had witnessed its effects, and was sure of it.

He considered himself, of course, an exception to the

general rule. If *he* had plenty of money he would buy cows with it, but would not consider himself wiser than his betters. When he had as many cows as the paramount chief, he would buy up all the books the missionary had to sell, and all the chalk and blackboards, and dump the whole lot into the Kuja River, or burn them; then Barongo and everybody else would leave the mission, and nobody would learn to read, and all the old men would be happy! At this thought he stopped and did a jig in the middle of the roadway, speared half a dozen imaginary foemen, and ran a couple of miles at top speed.

He was by no means winded when another thought entered his head, compelling him to slow down. What was wrong about books anyway? What argument had he to use against them? Was it not books which had taught those Kikuyu Christians all about the Great Sea beyond Mombasa, and about the white man's country, and the Beginnings of Things? Did not the white men record the wisdom and the bravery of their ancestors in books, and was not this a very good thing? Why had not Manyanta, the father of the Abagusii, done the same? Then would books have contained stuff worth reading, indeed; then they would have known whence their ancestors came, and all the lore and wisdom of a forgotten past. . . . Dared he admit so much to Barongo?

Strive as he might to think of arguments which would weigh with his friend, Sindiga was forced to concede point after point to civilization and missions. An unseen Hand was ruthlessly sweeping away a large portion of Sindiga's faith in the old men of Gusii, the white-haired priests and rulers of the people. Not his veneration for them as elders, be it understood, but simply his faith—that implicit confidence which emboldens a man to follow in another's wake along the darkest of unknown ways, where perhaps even his own footfalls and his own voice sound unnatural; that mys-

terious inward urge to implicit obedience which makes a man say and do what is contrary to his own natural impulses. This valuable thing Sindiga was losing. He found he could no longer regard the old men as infallible, and consequently began to feel lost; and how could he, feeling lost himself, hope to direct another's way? The old men, he remembered, had ostracized Barongo; they had placed him, and all mission adherents, outside the pale of their protection. In many parts of Gusii juries of old men denied cotton-clad persons the right of defense when sued by their enemies. Individual old men could be won over by bribes, but even then mission adherents had to pay heavily for justice. Up and down the country the old men were making solemn vows not to consent to the marriage of their daughters to school-goers in any circumstances.

Sindiga asked himself: Was it not the old men who, in the past, had encouraged the Gusii clans to make war on each other, so that their strength as a tribe had been diminished? Who but old Zakawa, the mad elder of Kitutu, had raised a voice of protest against this supreme folly? His father, the sage Nyambati, had been inclined to believe this part of Zakawa's message, but he had been a man of few words and given more to stirring up the tribesmen against their Lumbwa enemies than speaking words of peace to rival Gusii clans.

Presently Sindiga fell to thinking on how Zakawa's numerous prophecies had been fulfilled. The race *white as the hail*, wearing *white* apparel, and eating *white* bread, had come even as he had foretold. *Houses without cattle enclosures* had been built on Nyamosaka hill. Many native kraals had been burned to the ground as a result of the treachery of Otao, who had speared a white man—but not in battle. *That, which the old man had failed to do, their conquerors were doing for them*: peace was enforced, and at the white man's judgment-seat justice was being administered. True,

the foreigners never invited natives to eat with them —that was bad, and a point worth calling Barongo's attention to: but at least they did not accept bribes like their own chiefs and elders. As for Zakawa's prophecy that *mushrooms would be gathered on Bigendi hill*, had it not been fulfilled remarkably? Did not the women gather round silver shillings there, bartering for them the produce of their fields?—and did not the men also hunt these silver mushrooms, exchanging for them sheep, and cow-hides, and the skins of wild animals? The men were better able to bargain than the women; thus was the old man's prophecy fulfilled that *the woman who lacked a male child should have occasion to weep.* Recalling his conversation with Nyanguka on the subject of native and European hoes, he was reminded of yet another fulfillment of prophecy. *The smelter had left off his smelting, and no other had taken it up.* The man's sons, as a matter of fact, were working for white men, and the smelter, turned smith, now earned a living by mending broken tools. He had a little forge under the lee of Manga, and his bellows, Sindiga always thought, resembled a huge pipe—the sort of pipe smoked by the white men. Its bowl, a couple of feet in diameter, was covered with a goat-skin, and the "mouthpiece" entered the fire. When the smith pressed down on the skin, the air was compressed in the bowl and forced along the stem of the "pipe" into the fire. Sindiga recalled how he had marveled at the ingenuity of the device before he had seen the steam engine, the motor plow, and like wonders of the white man's invention.

He was descending the long hill which overlooked Nyamosaka—that same hill on which he had once narrowly escaped death at the hands of a Lumbwa spy—when a European passed him on a bicycle. Sindiga saluted and turned to watch him make the ascent.

Suddenly from a corn-field near the side of the road there sprang a crowd of young boys.

"Let us push you!" they cried in the best Ki-Swahili they could muster.

"No, I don't want to be pushed," the white man answered. "Go back to your work."

"We will push you first, and then we will go back to our work," they insisted.

So they pushed; and as they pushed, the bicycle began to wobble from side to side. Whereat they cried to each other, "Don't think, push!" But it was the hoeing season, and they were too tired from working in the fields to run for long uphill. Their pushing ceased, but they hung on like grim death, while the white man cried "Let go!" and pedaled his hardest. They just would not let go, and so the white man had nothing to do but to tumble off his machine quicker than he liked. He gave the urchins cents all round and bade them be off; and since the road at that place was all broken up with ant-bear holes he did not trouble to mount again, but climbed the rest of the way up the hill on foot.

Sindiga watched the stranger mount and then waited for the return of the boys. Prompted by curiosity he questioned them:

"What will you do with those cents?"

"Buy boiled corn," said one.

"Buy beads," said another.

"Buy pencils to write with," said the rest in chorus. "And then we shall go to school."

"Kai!" exclaimed Sindiga, quite overcome. Alas, for Gusii! That same spirit of eagerness to master the lore of the foreigners was abroad everywhere! Had he not felt it stir even within himself at times? The white man was bewitching them, and soon those who could neither read nor write would be few in number—few and of small consequence; hewers of wood, probably, and

drawers of water for the rest. He shook his spear in the air, bellowed an angry challenge to an unseen foe, and ran the rest of the way to Nyamosaka.

The old fighting ground had vastly changed. Most of it had been planted with trees foreign to Gusii, and hidden amongst them were the stone and brick houses of the white men. A wide road traversed Nyamosaka hill, leading down through an avenue of flame trees to the native hospital, Bigendi market, and the Riana stream.

In the valley between Nyamosaka hill and Nyanchwa, where of old time the *omotembe* trees used to grow thickly, numerous banana plantations had made their appearance. These belonged to Nubians, Baganda, and Swahilis, who owned homes in the township. The Abagusii did not love these black strangers; nor did they greatly respect them in view of the fact that they lived by trading instead of by the labour of their hands. Bananas were for many years despised and regarded as food fit only for the foreigners. It is a common mistake to suppose the most varieties of tropical fruit grow wild all over Africa;—as a matter of fact wild fruit is far less common over the larger part of habitable Africa than it is in Europe and America.

Bananas were not indigenous in Gusii, but had been brought from Uganda and the coast by way of Kavirondo. They were at first rejected as bad medicine by the native elders. In fact the Abagusii had never seen any kind of fruit, barring blackberries and unpalatable wild figs, prior to the introduction of bananas; and something in the nature of a religious upheaval was necessary to do away with the taboo put upon these by the old men. The first to plant did so in fear and trembling of the indignation of their ancestor's spirits. However, this fear of the ancestral spirits did not for long interfere with the natives' agricultural pursuits. Whatever bad medicine the foreigners would buy—wheat, bananas, or English vegetables—enterprising

Abagusii would plant. The spirits and the old men who gave them life are alike ignored; their reign of tyranny —which many wise Government administrators would for various reasons like to see prolonged—is at an end, and their influence for good or evil on the wane. A new generation is asserting independence of thought and action; and contrary to the opinions of many who deplore the detribalization of the native, the cessation of Christian missionary enterprise would not interfere with this process.

But in these circumstances, what is likely to happen to the morals of the young men? Fear of the spirits had to do not only with tribal taboo but with tribal obligations as well; it was made by the old men the chief incentive to well-doing. Released from the thralldom of this fear, disillusioned as to the infallibility of the old men, and sceptical of the supernatural, is it not likely that the youth will drift away from old-time moral standards?

Were there no other incentives to virtue than fear, one would certainly be justified in anticipating an era of universal immorality; but other incentives there are. One of these is habit; another is interdependency, which is akin to fear. But the greatest incentive to virtue is the love of God and humanity enshrined in the heart. There may be men who have lived godly lives through fear of eternal torment; incontrovertibly others have lived godly lives without it; and the simple religion of love will meet with a kindlier reception in East Africa, and accomplish more there for the good of humanity at large, than many of us realize.

But selfishness is rampant; lust and greed are on the increase, and neither missions, settlers, nor Government can be blamed for it. The decline of morality in Africa is to be traced largely to the decline of Christianity in Europe—more particularly to the materialism and worldliness of those who profess to be followers of

Christ. If there is a hope of rescuing Kaffirs from the pit of moral depravity into which they appear to be sliding, a way of escape for Africans from the scandalous anomalies of life obtaining in Christendom, a force or a Faith capable of eradicating greed and establishing brotherly love in the hearts of wayward savages, it must be discovered in this generation; for whatever will save Africa from the perils attendant on civilization's advance will save the whole world.

Sindiga did not delve deeply into the problems confronting his race. He saw certain evils and endeavored to combat them; but he arrived hastily at his conclusions, and frequently confused cause and effect. Notwithstanding the fact that he was an admirable debater, it was his nature to rely more upon his feelings than upon reason. The mental stimulus afforded by his ambition to rescue Barongo from the lure of civilization had caused these two to clash. While his heart was with the traditions of his forefathers, his intellect groped its way darkly through a forest of strange and new ideas. He had been tempted to regard the old men as bigoted and narrow; yet he dreaded the time when they should lose the last vestige of their power—when the rich and unscrupulous should exercise authority over the wise and brave, and when all who could neither rule nor trade would be reduced to a condition of servility.

Conflicting emotions such as these were still surging in his breast when, gaining the crest of Nyamosaka hill, he came in sight of the mission. He had not the remotest idea what he was going to say to his friend in defense of tradition. He was almost without a hope of winning him back; but for the love he bore him, and for the honor of his tribe, he was willing to make one more honest attempt.

XVI

BARONGO, THE CHRISTIAN

BARONGO'S ABSENCE FROM THE MISSION HAD TERminated a day earlier than John Neko, his teacher, friend, and one-time deliverer, had expected. Ondieki and the dissatisfied savage had continued in hot debate long after Sindiga had left the mission for his home in the hills. The pair had no sooner come to terms and made their departure than Barongo himself approached from another direction.

The sun had set and the conical roofs of the mission village stood out in dark silhouette against the fading light in the west. Barongo was walking slowly and meditatively, and as he walked he gazed beyond the mission at the sweep of bush-clad hillside behind it. He was recalling a certain day, long ago, when he had been lost and taken prisoner on that same hill slope; when Sindiga and he had risked their lives in an attempt to recover old Muraa's cattle. That had been many years before the white men came. They had succeeded in their project, but he, Barongo, had been captured. He remembered having spent a sleepless night in the hut of a man named Buto; and Buto would have killed him had not Neko interfered. A good deal of the bush had since been cut down, and where Buto's hut had stood lived the missionary in his red brick house.

Barongo stood and listened. An unusual silence brooded over the mission village, and most of the huts were in darkness; but from one open doorway

shone a gleam of bright firelight. A low sound greeted Barongo's ear—it was Neko's wife crooning to her nine days' old babe. The child was sick and would probably have died but for the ministrations of the missionary's wife.

The crooning ceased, and he heard his friend's voice addressing one of the older children. Neko had defied Gusii custom, which obliged a husband to absent himself from home when a child was expected and for some months after, and by not going away at all had scandalized not a few of his relatives.

Barongo walked thoughtfully in the direction of his own empty dwelling. He carried a staff in one hand and a lantern in the other, as well as a bundle of clothes and a book or two securely wrapped in a blanket. Pushing open the door of his dwelling he went in, flung his staff and makeshift suitcase on the bed, and fumbled for a match. He found one at last, lit the lantern, and placing it on the rickety table by the bedside, sat down.

He was given to taking pride in the furniture of his humble dwelling, but for once he ignored the high European chairs and the folding camp chair. Taking a hearth stone from the empty fireplace, he sat down on it instead; then he gazed wistfully around on the mud walls, hung with pictures cut from fashion catalogues and sundry newspapers. How lonesome the place was! How utterly void of cheer!

He was Kibagendi's youngest son—the only one who had displeased his father by attending the mission school. His brothers were all married and in comfortable circumstances. None of them knew what it was to return fatigued from a long journey to find their homes shrouded in darkness and as silent as the grave. What had he, Barongo, not sacrificed in going contrary to his father's will?

As he sat there in the stillness, he reflected that

books, clothing, furniture, and the few civilized luxuries with which he had surrounded himself did not make up for the loss of a father's affection. Nor could such things take the place of wife and children in a home. Of course, he knew the remedy was in his own hands. His father withheld from him the purchase price of a wife because he wished to be obeyed. "Give up attending school, and I'll do the best I can for you," he had said—and Barongo had chosen the mission, and celibacy.

There *was* a girl —— But what was the use of dreaming dreams? Kibagendi had shown himself obdurate, and that ended the matter.

Barongo had a sister slightly younger than himself. He thought that if she would get married it might simplify matters. Possessed of her dowry, there was a possibility of his father relenting and yielding to him a portion of his augmented wealth: prosperity did sometimes soften hearts.

Barongo's eyes fell upon a basket of unground *wimbi* about an arm's length away from where he sat. That *wimbi*—he reflected—would have been ground, greens would have been gathered, and an appetizing meal prepared against his return had he been a married man. He stretched out his hand, and taking a handful of the dry, uncooked grain proceeded to munch it reflectively.

"It needs setting out to dry," he said to himself. "It's musty, and the rats have been at it. That comes of leaving an empty house behind one. The grain never used to get like that when Machuki and Obara shared my bed—they did well to get married! It's a wonder anyone ever gets married nowadays with the chiefs and elders looking after themselves so well, and marrying all the eligible young girls in their hoary old age!"

He arose, and kicking the hearth stone back into its place, grasped the lantern.

"I'll look in at John Neko's," thought he, "and find out why everything is so quiet in the village."

There is no twilight in Equatorial Africa; consequently when Barongo stepped outside it was quite dark. A lone star glimmered over the escarpment in the east, but the rest of the sky was clouded over, and lightning illuminated intermittently the northern horizon.

"The rains have come," thought Barongo. "We shall have a storm tonight or tomorrow. After I've wished Neko good night I'll go and burn the rubbish in my *wimbi* field while it is yet dry."

With the uprising of a strong wind John Neko had closed the door of his hut, so that the firelight no longer streamed through it. Barongo had so often been a visitor there, however, that he could have found his way to it with his eyes shut.

He paused momentarily before going in, having caught another sound than the crooning of the mother to her babe. Borne along on the breeze it came—the sound of men, women, and children singing; at first but a faint melody, like the sound of bees or wind in the *omotembe* treetops, but growing clearer and louder every moment.

The wind freshened, and Barongo recognized individual voices.—It was the students returning from a day's evangelical tour. They always sang thus on the march. Sometimes, when they felt like it, they would break into a run, and adapt portions of the Psalms to rhythmical Gusii tunes. From one district to another they would go, singing and teaching what they knew of the Christian religion; dividing into twos and threes to converse with natives laboring in their fields; then regathering to sing, to pray, and to march forward again.

It was their own idea—not the missionary's—thus to aid the spreading of the Christian gospel, and their

efforts were meeting with extraordinary success. The mission adherents numbered thousands, but their white teachers were few. The native converts recognized that the spread of Christianity depended largely upon themselves. Thus the Message preached by Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot, by Jesus of Nazareth to the Jews, by Paul and others to the Gentiles north of the Great Sea, is today being preached with power by black Christians up and down the length of the great African continent. One of the greatest signs of the times is the way Africa is responding to the teachings of the Galilean. Whether or not Christianity reveals God's plan of salvation for the world; whether or not it is antiquated and out of date, as some affirm; whether or not it is Truth unfolded or deception masked, it is taking possession of Africa as it took possession of Europe hundreds of years ago. . . . And it is not yet a hundred years since Livingstone, a solitary white man among millions of savages, first blazed the trail for others to follow.

As Barongo listened to the singing, his heart warmed towards the foreigners who had brought this new Life to his country; to the Christ whose voice had resurrected men and nations, and to the Message which had so completely altered the course of his own life. Vaguely he realized that behind Christianity there was a Power capable of revolutionizing the world.

He knocked on the door of the hut.

"Come in, Barongo," called Neko.

"Were you expecting me?" Barongo asked.

"No, I expected you back tomorrow, only I knew it was you because you knocked. No one else knocks on my door. It's an understood thing that anyone wishing to see me walks right in. I'm not a white man, you know, even if I *am* a Christian."

A sturdy youth of some fifteen years proffered

Barongo a stool. "How are you, brother?" said he, extending a hand.

"Very well! And how is my protector?" replied Barongo.

The young man laughed and declared he was very fit.

"It's a long time," remarked Neko, "since you took him up in your arms and by so doing saved your skin!" —So saying, he stood up and enveloped Barongo's hand in his.

"A very long time," the son of Kibagendi acquiesced with a smile; adding, "Both of you have improved in your looks since the day I first set eyes on you!"

Having greeted Neko's wife by her Christian name—she steadfastly and emphatically refused to be called by any other name than plain "Mary"—Barongo shook hands with each and all of the young man's brothers and sisters—but he sat down to do it! They were all Mary's children, Neko having put in no claim to the children of the wives he had put away when he became a Christian, though they were his by Gusii law.

Greetings over, they sat down to supper, Barongo taking his place in the family circle as a matter of course, just as any other Omogusii acquainted with John Neko would have done.

"Two visitors from outside came to see you today," said Neko, smacking his lips over a mouthful of *wimbi* bread. Though he believed himself thoroughly converted to Christianity, he ate and drank like a savage, and was conservative enough to lecture Barongo at fairly frequent intervals for wearing shoes and stockings.

Barongo dug his fingers into the bread, scooped out a sticky lump of it, popped it into his mouth, and piloted it with his tongue into his left cheek before replying. "Who might they have been?" he asked then.

John Neko gulped down appreciately a few mouthfuls of sour milk, and leisurely replied: "One was a big,

strong, athletic looking young fellow, with a face like the rising sun and a voice like thunder heard from afar off. He said he was your friend—a very old friend; and when I told him you were away and would not be back till tomorrow, all the light went out of his face."

"Sindiga!" exclaimed Barongo. "And the other?"

"Also a big fellow, but not at all a man to my liking. He had the air of a dog without a master. He wore cotton clothing though—a good shirt and shorts, as a matter of fact—whereas Sindiga wore only a blanket. The two had words in front of your hut, and then the one I didn't take to went off in a rage. He hadn't gone far when an old man ——"

He stopped short in his narration, and looked across at his guest in sudden dismay. "Why, Barongo, what's the matter?" he questioned.

Barongo had arisen from his stool and was leaning up against the wall, his face drawn as if in pain, and horror looking out of his eyes. He turned and looked beseechingly at John Neko.

"I'm poisoned!" he stammered. "John—what shall I do?"

John Neko's wife looked anxiously in the direction of her children, who had all stopped eating, and then back at Barongo's fear-stricken face. He looked haggard.

"Kai!" exclaimed Neko. "Barongo, my son, there's nothing wrong with the bread?"

"Yes, nothing wrong—with the bread," said Barongo, sliding down to a recumbent position on the earth floor. "But say—Ondieki—did he—go—into my house?"

Neko remembered the name, and stared incredulously and aghast at Barongo. "You think—you believe—*that*! To be sure, he did go in now that I think of it. But—Barongo, I thought you hadn't an enemy in the world!" Saying which, he filled a gourd with water. "Drink," he ordered; and then, addressing his eldest son; "Simba,

you go quickly and fetch the white man!" But Simba had already disappeared.

Barongo drank the water and lay back. Neko pushed a sack stuffed with wood shavings under his head. A quarter of an hour passed and Simba burst into the room. There was no one with him.

"See! Here's medicine," he shouted. "Swallow it quick." And then he told how he had slipped away to Barongo's hut, and seeing no other signs of food there had concluded poison must have been mixed with the grain. There was a very old man named Buto living on Nyanchwa Hill, who knew something about poisons. Simba had gone to him with a handful of the grain and a present of a fowl, and had begged for medicine. The medicine he had been given, Buto had assured him, was an antidote for every poison under the sun.

Barongo swallowed it without question. Whether from faith in the medicine or its veritable potency, it was not long before he began to show signs of recovery.

"I told Ondieki I should do all I could to dissuade Kibagendi from accepting his cattle," said Barongo, "and he declared he would poison me if I did. He had been drinking and was in a nasty mood at the time, so I took no notice of his threat. But it's a good thing I ate no more of that *wimbi* than I did!"

John Neko was furious. Barongo had never seen him so wild about anything. He simply bellowed his indignation. Neko was a man who had been born with a savage temper, but since coming to the mission he had fairly conquered it. This affair "roused Satan in him," and he frankly said so. When he grew tired of anathematizing Ondieki he turned on the British Government.

"Why ever," he demanded, "don't they look up all these poison sellers and rid the country of such pests? Medicine-men received short shrift at the hands of the Nyaribaris in my father's time. Nowadays if a man is sued for being a wizard, or a devil worshiper, or a

medicine-man, the *Bwanas* laugh and say: 'If he thinks he can kill people, let him come and try to kill us!' It's all right for them to talk that way, since they have stronger medicine than the medicine-men themselves, but what about us poor people? Nobody is left to die a natural death these days!"

Barongo was restless that night, but much improved the following day. He worked all morning gathering and burning the dried roots hoed from his *wimbi* field, and in the afternoon attended school.

During the course of his first day at home Barongo made a painful discovery. The box in which he stored his few worldly possessions had been broken open, and besides a cheap watch and a bundle of cents, a good woolen blanket had gone from it. He had no doubts as to who had taken it, but it never occurred to him to sue the thief. Instead, he decided to go to Ondieki in a friendly way and ask for its return. In this decision, however, he reckoned without his host of the previous night.

John Neko knew that blanket well. There happened not to be another like it in Gusii. When that same morning he beheld a Luo parading the township with it, he stepped up to him and demanded where he got it.

The man looked his questioner up and down, and then replied that he had borrowed it from an Omogusii with whom he was living.

Neko did not trouble to ask the name of the lender, but promptly reported the theft, and the attempt to poison Barongo, to the District Commissioner at his office.

No one familiar with African customs will be surprised at the Luo borrowing that blanket without asking the owner's permission—French-leave, as it were. Kaffir-leave would really be a better phrase, for blankets, skins, suits of clothing, boots, hats, shirts, trousers, and the like are never treated as the exclusive property

of individuals, except perhaps by *very* civilized Kaffirs; the rank and file are pleased to regard all such articles as communal property. Ondieki's Luo friend had borrowed the blanket not knowing that it had been stolen.

Barongo, knowing nothing of Neko's action, thought that the morrow would be time enough to see Ondieki; accordingly, as soon as school was out, he went back to his garden. He had barely finished burning the rubbish when the storm broke which had overtaken Sindiga and Nyakiage at Nyanguka's kraal.

Soon after sunrise the next day, Barongo was distributing the ashes of the previous day's bonfires over the ground which he expected to sow with grain, when Neko's son, Simba, joined him. He had called to Barongo imperiously from a few yards off, but now seemed somewhat uncertain how best to begin to deliver his message.

"Barongo," he said, "Ondieki has never been much of a friend to you, has he?"

"We have fallen out a few times," Barongo replied.

"He is a terrible coward, so they say."

"Maybe not so bad as his enemies make out."

"He's never done you a good turn."

"Well, what are you getting at?"

"It's like this. Yesterday when John was in the township he saw the Big *Bwana* and told him all about Ondieki's trying to poison you; and the *Bwana* asked questions, and it appears that Ondieki has been up to other mischief. The *Bwana* sent an *askari* after him yesterday and his trial comes off this morning. And now you have been called. The *Bwana* wants to hear what you have to say.—Now you will tell him everything, won't you, and not let your old enemy go scot-free? Let the white men kill him quite!"

"Who told you all this?"

"The *Bwana* has sent an *askari* for you."

"Sent an *askari* after *me*! Kai tah-tah!"

Barongo speared the nearest pile of ashes with a long stick he held in his hand, and set off down the hill.

"Tell the *Bwana* the truth!" Simba yelled after him. "Remember you're a Christian, and Christians don't tell lies!"

Barongo found the *askari* waiting for him near the schoolhouse and greeted him in the Ki-Swahili.—This widely known tongue was becoming more and more popular in Gusii, but those natives who could read made the quickest progress in it.—The *askari* returned the greeting, and led the way across the valley to the courthouse on Nyamosaka Hill. This was an airy structure, built high on a concrete foundation, and thatched. The timbers supporting the roof were weighty and strong, and the eaves hung well over the reed walls.

The white magistrate sat pen in hand behind a desk, with a large pile of blue papers at his right hand. He had just laid aside one four-page sheet on which was written in minute detail both Neko's charges and Ondieki's elaborate defense. Standing before the desk, facing the court, was his native translator, a shrewd wit who believed in being "all things to all men"—a Christian among Christians and a pagan whenever it suited him. He was lavishly hospitable to the native elders and maintained almost as many wives as the Paramount Chief. Not a few of the natives of Kavirondo imagined that he wielded more power than the Big *Bwana* himself.

Neko was standing near the main entrance. He pressed Barongo's hand as he passed, and urged him to "tell the *Bwana* everything."

Ondieki stood in the dock with the air of a preacher with a guilty conscience about to deliver a sermon on the text, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." This impression was heightened by the fact that he was wearing a superb, black, silk coat. He had suborned a host

of witnesses who were prepared to swear his innocence of any and every offense he might be charged with.

In the rear of the building were a number of white-haired elders, whose opinion would be asked on any point having to do with native law. These old men belonged to the *baraza*, or native jury. Barongo was surprised to see Kibagendi himself among them, talking in an excited undertone to the Headman of Kanyimbo. Neither of them saw Barongo. As he entered by one door they went out by another, and did not return.

The chief of the Nyaribaris, three native policemen, and the Headman of Boguche were present, and standing with these servants of the Crown was the Paramount Chief himself—a conservative Kitutu whose lack of education was balanced by a large fund of worldly wisdom. He was reputed to be immensely rich, and to have between thirty and forty wives. The natives have never been able to agree as to the exact number.

Several petty lawsuits had been disposed of, and Ondieki had already been made to tremble in his new shoes for having told lies to the Commissioner. What had passed between the white man and Kibagendi, Barongo never learned. Neko himself had only just arrived.

The "witnesses" had done their best to defend Ondieki, knowing that there was small hope of their receiving any remuneration if he was convicted. Despite all their efforts they had had but ill success. While they had succeeded in proving to the *Bwana's* satisfaction that the cattle dowry had been paid over, they had failed to establish their claim that the marriage ceremony itself had taken place.

A cross-examination had just revealed the fact that the accused had already six wives. The white man yielded to the temptation of inquiring why he wanted another. This was merely a joke on the much-married interpreter who, being unable to blush, put one hand

over his mouth and tried to look self-conscious before proceeding to translate the question. It was at this juncture in the proceedings that Barongo and the *askari* arrived.

"Ah, this is the man, is it?" asked the white man of the *askari*. Then, addressing Barongo: "Do you know Ki-Swahili?"

Barongo assented.

"Good!" (He used the Ki-Swahili himself.) "I want to ask you a question or two. . . . Where's Neko? Come here, Neko! Now, Barongo, pay attention! I believe you have lost some of your property—is that correct?"

"Yes, sir," said Barongo.

"John Neko here, he's your friend, is he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that preacher fellow over there" (indicating Ondieki), "is he also a friend of yours?"

"Why . . . yes, sir," Barongo made reply, but it was as though he swallowed something down as he spoke. As for Ondieki he beamed round on everyone present as much as to say, "That clears me, does it not?"

"Hm. Your friend here, this man John Neko, says someone tried to poison you the other day. Is that correct?"

"I thought so at the time, sir."

"Have you any suspicions as to who it was?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Now with regard to proofs—can you give me any evidence which will throw light on the matter?"

"No, sir." . . . The answer was given with decision.

Now some would say that for a Kaffir thus to shield an enemy was pathetic; others might say it was noble; yet others, knowing that the average justice-loving Kaffir would sooner pay ten shillings court-fees to recover five than forgive a debt, may feel incredulous. But truth to say, it came easier to Barongo than it would to most of us. He had not merely read his Bible, he had studied

it. But John Neko's indignation was such that, had he been allowed, he would have protested energetically.

But . . . "Let your friend speak for himself!" commanded the magistrate. "You have had your say."

"Yes, sir," said John Neko submissively, but he gave Barongo a look which was full of meaning. The white man saw it and comprehended the situation.

"See here!' he said to Barongo. "You have had a blanket stolen, a watch, and—what else? A lot of money —that was it, was it not, Neko? You will sue the thief surely, won't you?"

"No, sir."

"Well, what do you propose to do about it?"

"I'll go and ask him to give me back what he has borrowed when I need it, sir."

"Eh? What's that? Why not ask him right now? I imagine you'd have a better chance of getting it!"

"How, sir?" . . . Barongo kept his eyes off Ondieki and pretended bewilderment. "You don't mean he is here, sir?"

"Well now, that's not for me to say, is it? But you are not going to let him keep your goods indefinitely?"

"Until I need them, sir. We Abagusii borrow and lend a great deal, sir."

The white man motioned with his hand.

The interpreter stepped back, and stooping for an instant behind the desk stood up with the stolen property in his hand.

"I think you had better take them," said the magistrate to Barongo. Then, noticing him hesitate: "Come now, don't tell me they are not yours. You know, I wouldn't mind having a blanket like that myself if you don't want it. Both it and the other articles were found in your hut this morning."

"Eh!" exclaimed Barongo, now really bewildered. "Found in my hut, sir?"

"Yes. I sent an *askari* to have a look round and he found them in a box by the side of your bed."

Barongo clapped his hands in amazement. "But, sir, they were gone when I last looked in!"

"Indeed. So you admit they were stolen then—not lent?"

Barongo wondered how he could have let slip this information. He felt in a hole, and looked it. The white man was busy writing.

"Heigh-ho! Don't look so downcast. You haven't given your friend away. This is the man you have to thank!" and the magistrate pointed to the Luo, who was shrinking away in a corner of the room with a look of complete dejection on his face. This unhappy man had not long since informed the Commissioner, who was also acting as magistrate, that the "borrowed" property had already been returned; whereas Ondieki, a while before, had denied borrowing anything from Barongo whatsoever.

Barongo could not fatham the *Bwana's* reference to the Luo, but he now took his belongings with an irrepressible sigh of satisfaction. To most natives the loss of a real, all-woolen blanket is as great a misfortune as the loss of an automobile would be to a European.

Barongo did not observe, neither did John Neko, that at the beginning of the interrogation Sindiga had insinuated himself into the building by the crowded main entrance, and had since been listening intently to all that went on. Not having found his friend at the mission, he had inquired for Neko, and finding both had gone to the courthouse had followed them there.

Needless to say, Sindiga had been far more amazed than John Neko to witness Barongo's attempt to shield Ondieki. It fitted in with neither Gusii custom, nor with his conception of the white man's religion which his friend had adopted. For his tribe liked to see swift judgment fall upon transgressors; and, judging from

the fact that for looting the township the Abagusii had lost ten thousand head of cattle, beside sixteen hundred young men conscripted for work away from their reserve, civilized tribes were no more merciful. Why, then, was Barongo showing Ondieki mercy? Was he crazy, or bent on starting a new altruistic religion of his own? —or had he some other object in view?

"We have not quite done yet," said the magistrate. "This *askari* has something to tell us. Come forward, Nyakundi." An Omogusii with the blue tunic and red sash of a native policeman stepped forward and stood at attention. "You can tell us your story first and then we may have something more to say about this poisoning affair."

"Yes, sir," said the *askari.* "It was like this. Not finding Ondieki at home yesterday, nor yet at the mission, I made inquiries and was told that he had gone off with a girl into the hills. I followed him, but was misdirected. I had to retrace my steps to the timber bridge that crosses the Kuja River, and on the way down I caught sight of the prisoner with two other men and the girl. She had no mind to go with them and was fighting to get away. She did break away too, and made straight for the Nakuana Falls, followed by Ondieki and his two friends. Just then another Omogusii came up and knocked one of them down. He told me his name: it was Sindiga, the son of one Nyambati. I saw Ondieki deliberately throw a spear at him which narrowly missed his head. It was not a hunting spear, but a spear like those we used to fight with in the olden days . . ."

The *Bwana* interrupted: "You can produce it?"

"Yes, sir," said the *askari,* and went to fetch it, while the European took a fresh sheet of paper.

Barongo had listened in astonishment to the *askari's* narrative, scarcely believing his own ears. Sindiga, at mention of himself, had discreetly stepped outside, but was still standing sufficiently near to hear all that went

on. The spear was produced, and the elders agreed that it was no hunting spear.

The white man looked interrogatively in Ondieki's direction.

. . . "It is not my spear, neither did I throw it. That *askari* has a grudge against me." As he said this Ondieki looked defiantly round the court.

"That is a lie!" cried a voice from the doorway in Ki-Swahili.

"Who is that?"

The white man addressed the question to his interpreter, but before he had had a chance to reply Sindiga was before the desk and answering for himself. Well it was for him that Nyambati's spear had not been in his hand when the *askari* conversed with him at the falls, or he too might have had to answer some awkward questions.

"I am Sindiga, the son of Nyambati," he declared, "at whom Ondieki threw his spear; and I testify not only to his having thrown the spear, but also to his having purchased poison from Buto, the son of Ombonyi, and with the poison having attempted to kill Barongo, the son of Kibagendi."

This evidence from an unexpected quarter occasioned a hubbub in the court which the interpreter tried in vain to quell. He looked appealingly at the *Bwana*, who arose and himself commanded silence.

"Go on," he said then to Sindiga, noting that he had something further to say.

"I visited the mission the other day, sir, as John Neko here can testify. I saw Ondieki come out of Barongo's hut and spoke to him. Then Neko and I watched him bargain with the medicine-man over the price of the poison, but at the time we did not know it was poison."

"Is that so, Neko?"

Neko assented.

The magistrate turned to Sindiga again. "You say one Buto sold the poison to Ondieki?"

"Buto, the son of Ombonyi, sir."

"Nyakundi!" addressing the *askari* before him, "do you know where that gentleman lives? Good! Go and fetch him, and bring him to me after lunch."

The *askari* saluted and promptly disappeared.

Sindiga went on: "And as for the spear throwing, the lady in the doorway was a witness of it. But for her having called out I should have been hit."

Barongo looked round and saw Sindiga's sister Nyakiage, in her goat-skins and brass ornaments, standing facing the *Bwana* with her arms akimbo and her eyes flashing. She had heard of the trial and had followed her brother to the township out of mere curiosity; but having heard all, she was now in a tremendous state of excitement.

"Yes, sir," she declared vehemently. "I saw it, sir. I saw it all! Listen to Sindiga, sir."

The white man tapped the desk for a moment with his pen. Then he turned to Ondieki. "You have heard all the evidence. Tell me, did you or did you not go into Barongo's hut the day before yesterday?"

Ondieki looked at the men who were to have helped him in this scrape, but they were tongue-tied. They had had few opportunities for making speeches in Ondieki's favor, and now saw that all was over.

"Yes, sir," said Ondieki feebly. "But I was drunk at the time. So was I when I threw the spear."

"You admit having thrown it then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hm." He reached down and drew from underneath the table at which he was sitting a basket of *wimbi*. "This *wimbi* contains more than enough poison to kill a man," he said, speaking slowly and distinctly.— "Put that into Ekegusii," he added, "so that these old men can hear." When the translator had done this

the magistrate stood up and addressed the elders: "Barongo here is Ondieki's friend. Anyone can see it. My opinion is that such a rascal does not deserve to have any friends—what say you?"

The chiefs, headmen, and elders present shook their heads and said, "A bad man, a very bad man." A few of them clapped their hands softly, as a sign of their sorrow that such a knave should be found in Gusii.

The magistrate did not pursue the subject. It had been an interesting case, but he was beginning to feel hungry. Turning to Ondieki, he said: "The last time you were up before me it was on a charge of cattle stealing. The owner of the cattle was a Christian. He said, 'Don't punish him—all I want is my cattle back'; and so I forgave you. I perceive that your friend here is likewise anxious to intercede for you, but I cannot allow it.—*Askari!*" A native policeman came to attention. "Take him away. Five years—I can't give less. Five years' hard but honest work, and may you come out a less selfish and a more honorable man.—Neko and Sindiga, I have nothing more to say to you.—Barongo, you can go. Take your property with you, and remember that you are still on earth; and be thankful that down here on the earth there's a lock-up for men who are at enmity with their kind."

XVII

THE CLIFF ROSEATE . . .

PRESAGED BY POWERFUL WINDS, RUMBLES OF DISTANT thunder, scurrying black clouds, and billowy white clouds accumulating and heaving upwards over the shadowed region of the escarpment, another electrical storm struck Gusii that afternoon. It commenced earlier and lasted longer than the one of the day before. The lightning took toll of sheep and cattle, roofs were lifted by small whirlwinds, torrents of water from the eastern watershed swept away timber bridges spanning the Kuja River, native paths were converted into narrow gorges for swiftly rushing streams, and hail stripped the *omotembe* trees of their spring glory of scarlet blossom. But the next morning the unconquered sun rose majestically into a blue and cloudless sky, drove back the shadow of the escarpment into the ferny alcoves of the cliff, and coaxed Gusii parents to rise betimes and sow their seed.

Thus morning after morning throughout the whole of the rainy season does the East African sun rise golden, and glorious, and triumphant over the hills and the valleys of Kenya. However cloudy and wet the afternoon, however dark and stormy the night—in the morning the clouds disperse and disappear. The sun journeys through a clear blue sky till noon, when the winds freshen, the clouds gather, and the rain returns; but only for a few short hours—two or three on an average. Days and weeks of sunshiny weather in the middle of the rainy season are not uncommon.

There are no whole months given over to yellow skies and dank mists, no whole days of cold drizzling rain, no whole weeks of wet without a gleam of sunshine; and scarcely ever a wet morning.

Yet, when it does rain in Kenya, there is no pretense about it—no mocking uncertainty as to whether it is going to be wet or dry; but suddenly, a burst of fury from a black sky, drenching cold rain flung about by maddened winds, forked lightning, and crashing thunder. Then, usually unexpectedly, the heavy, black curtain is swept aside. If the storm has not lasted over sundown there is a flood of yellow or crimson sunlight—possibly a brilliant rainbow; the retreating storm clouds radiate light, and very soon the heavens are as blue and cloudless as before.

Sindiga was walking with Barongo in the morning sunlight on the windy edge of the escarpment, where long ago they had herded cattle and played Gusii hockey together. He had reached another crisis in his life—a crisis very different from the one when, overcoming his aversion to shedding blood, he had fought and slain his first Lumbwa. It had been a soul-racking experience that, but mindful of Gusii tradition, he had faced the situation like a son of Manga and braved it through. A still, small Voice had urged him to defy tradition, but he had encouraged the savage within him to rise and quell it. He had emerged from that conflict a hero in the eyes of the Kitutu clan and a warrior of renown—but the Voice which had spoken to him had not been silenced. It had spoken to him again and again without his understanding it, and now Barongo had identified himself with it. He was urging that the Voice was right after all—that the elders, and Nyanguka, and Gusii tradition were all wrong; that it was God Himself who had spoken, and that in very truth He meant the peoples of the earth to dwell together in unity of heart and mind, following after love, joy, peace,

and a knowledge of their Creator. Sindiga was half persuaded that his friend was right—which meant, of course, that the Voice must have been right, and his own past life all wrong.

But the battle was still on between the savage and the Voice; the storm that had broken over Sindiga's soul was still raging, and Sindiga, from gazing across at Kisumu where the railway and civilization ended, fell to gazing up into the blue heavens where (his friend believed) dwelt GOD.

Had this Being—whom savages like himself vaguely referred to as the Creator—an interest in the Gusii race, an interest utterly unselfish, unassociated with any sense of dependence upon them? Like his own interest in Barongo, for instance, or Nyanguka's interest in him?

Barongo had alluded to the Creator as a God of Love. Was it possible, as Barongo maintained, that by embracing Christianity he, Sindiga, could draw nigh to such a One—the Embodiment of Truth, as lovable as omnipotent? Ah! thought he, the Abagusii wanted a king like that!

—Sindiga's preoccupied demeanor had induced Barongo to relapse into respectful silence. Beside a clump of wild palms on the edge of the escarpment they sat down.

"Barongo," Sindiga said presently, "why was it that you attempted to shield Ondieki?"

"We were friends once," Barongo replied. "Also he is an Omogusii and my brother. I made up my mind a long time ago to do all in my power to convert him. To have done him an evil turn would only have embittered him and widened the gap between him and God."

Sindiga showed neither surprise nor incredulity at Barongo's answer, but replied, using almost exactly the words of John Neko, "He is as much out of your reach as mine."

"Perhaps. But whether I can win him or not, it is

Christian to forgive one's enemies. Once one has heard the Voice of God one's whole outlook is changed."

Sindiga knit his brows. He seemed to remember Barongo's having forgiven Ondieki for innumerable petty meannesses prior to the coming of the white men, and he wondered whether God had spoken to his friend on those occasions also.

"Do you think the Abagusii should forgive the Lumbwas?" he queried, carrying the principle to its logical conclusion with Kaffir-like pertinency.

"Yes," answered Barongo with conviction. "Christianity teaches us to love, and not to war. At Christ's birth the angels sang, 'Peace on the earth, goodwill toward men.'"

Sindiga pondered again that word "goodwill," recalling the song of the school-children and his conversation with old Nyarango. "Giving people a helping hand —that's what Christianity means," Machuki had told his father. It meant more than that to Barongo, Sindiga could see, but he himself had never supposed that it had anything at all to do with individual relationships. More and more he was appreciating the fact that "Christianity" and "Civilization" were not interchangeable terms; that in whatsoever respect the white man's morals were superior to their own, it was probably due to the uplifting influence of a great religion. Most Abagusii became self-centered and conceited as soon as they learned to read and write; he had observed that the Christian religion counteracted this tendency and brought out the best that was in a man. Barongo claimed that the Christian religion was capable of changing completely a man's nature! At all events, Sindiga thought, if its adherents lived up to Machuki's definition of Christianity they could scarcely become selfish and grasping—mere mimics of the most unlovely of the white men's traits. Did not this mean that Christianity

was an antidote to the evils attendant on civilization's advance?

It may seem strange that Sindiga, the more thoughtful of the two friends, should have been the last to realize this fact. To tell the truth he was the first, for Barongo —as enthusiastic over civilization almost as over Christianity itself—still persisted in confusing the two. He saw in the former no evils needing counteracting. Even could he have been persuaded that the lot of many white men was less fortunate than his own, he would have blamed, not civilization, but human nature. In the ultimate sense, Barongo was right, for it is surely the imperfections in human nature that are primarily responsible for the deficiencies in civilization. The remarkable thing was that Barongo's simple faith, which was divided between the white men and God, did not admit of deficiencies in a civilization so wonderful and attractive. He knew nothing of industrial slavery, smoke-blackened cities and dismal slums, armed capitalism, white criminals, and chemical warfare. Living a sheltered life in the heart of his reserve, of that

> strange disease of modern life,
> With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
> Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts,—

Barongo knew absolutely nothing. He was even blind to much of the selfishness and superficiality which characterized many so-called converts to Christianity. However, such blindness as this was the exception and not the rule. The old men saw the shortcomings of mission adherents plainly enough, and so did most of the young and middle-aged men of the tribe.

Unlike Barongo, Nyambati's son was a typical native, shrewd and discriminating in his judgments of men and manners. Barongo, when attempting to dissuade Sindiga from going to work on the railway, had attacked—not civilization—but white men; whereas Sindiga had

rather liked the foreigners from the beginning, despite their failings. Barongo's objections to white men, not being deeply thought out, had given way as soon as he became personally acquainted with one or two; but Sindiga's objections to civilization had been much more deeply rooted. As far as Christianity was concerned, the materialism of its representatives had been his "Hill Difficulty." He had climbed the worst of the way when, after listening to Barongo a long while, he grasped for the first time the essential spirit of Christ's teachings. Kibagendi's son, who had swung from one extreme to the other and was now prepared to acknowledge all white men paragons of virtue and wisdom, had yet to meet his "Hill Difficulty." But in the meantime, from his better understanding of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, he was able to throw considerable light upon his friend's pathway.

That morning on the cliff Sindiga's misconceptions of Christianity were entirely cleared away. He learned that Christians were taught to honor, not to despise, old age; that the brevity of their marriage service was no indication that they practiced free-love; that their religion in no way involved their becoming slaves to the white men, though it did insist upon their laboring unselfishly for the good of others; that Christianity had a great deal to do with individual relationships after all, but was not a thing enforceable by law. He learned that the aggrandizement of the individual at the expense of his fellows was opposed to the spirit and example of Christ. At the same time Barongo convinced him that money was not intrinsically bad, nor were possessions, but setting the heart upon them instead of upon the uplift and betterment of human beings was bad. Moreover, thinking of all he had seen up the line, Sindiga came to the conclusion that though the Government accorded the old men political power, their moral influence would inevitably wane with the inexorable ad-

vance of civilization; and that unless Christianity succeeded in stemming the growing tide of lawlessness and immorality, civilization by itself might prove a questionable benefit.

By far the greatest obstacle to the spread of Christianity in Africa has been the time-honored practice of polygamy. Frankly and enthusiastically Sindiga defended polygamous marriages, pointing out that they strengthened tribes against their enemies by increasing rapidly the population; that they enabled all women to have homes of their own so that none had to remain spinsters to the end of their days; and that they insured men against old age, by so enlarging the family circle that no man ever started on the downhill of life without wives, and children, and grandchildren to support him.

Barongo allowed him to exhaust all his arguments, and then challenged him.—"Are the Abagusii stronger because tottering old age relegates to itself the choice of the fairest maidens in the land?" he demanded; "because white-haired, ailing old men, rich in cattle, multiply to themselves women, leaving to the sturdy *moran* the gleanings? because such a price is put upon the hardy girls who remain, that the majority of us must put off the luxury of marriage till middle age? What! Are the Abagusii stronger for being the sons of girl mothers and old men? Are we more numerous or more hardy for this foolishness? Are we wiser than other races? As to our marriage customs insuring us against old age,—what prospects have you and I, and a thousand others, of seeing our grandchildren at work on our corn-fields? I haven't sufficient cattle to pay for *one* wife, prices having been forced up so; and you, with your cattle, will be compelled to consider yourself fortunate if you get a child-wife who knows how to cook! Eligible girls, Sindiga, are a rare commodity these days —the old men have forestalled us!"

Sindiga's belief in the advantages of polygamy was the last link binding him to the faith of his forefathers. When *it* snapped, it was as though his life-bark had broken its moorings and was drifting out of sight of land.

"Barongo, you're right," he admitted dejectedly. "And Zakawa was right when he said, 'The old men feed themselves and neglect their children.' They have certainly led us into a thicket, and it rather seems as though you Christians must show us the way out of it."

There was another brief silence, at the end of which Sindiga continued: "I have cattle, but it is as you say. The marriageable girls are bespoken by old men, and only children are left—and who wants a wife the height of a water-pot? If I were in your position now, with that black-eyed daughter of Zakawa trailing me everywhere, I should consider myself fortunate; your father Kibagendi is bound to give in and make up the necessary quota of cattle sooner or later."

Mention of Zakawa's daughter caused such a look of blank amazement to spread over Barongo's features that Sindiga was nonplussed, and inclined to imagine that in some way he had hurt his friend's feelings.

"Don't be offended, old man. I hope you will let me rejoice with you," he said.

"But Sindiga!" exclaimed Barongo. "Do you suppose that I, an Omogusii, would consort with a married woman?"

"Married? *You* say she is married? You don't mean to say you will surrender her up to Ondieki after the way he has acted? Surely your religion doesn't demand *that*!"

Barongo's face relaxed—then he laughed out loud.

"Why, the girl you mentioned just now ran away from two Omogusii husbands and finally married a Lumbwa! I myself haven't set eyes on her since Nyanguka's wedding day, when she offered to guide you to

her father's kraal. Ah! You were nearer to getting married then than I have ever been—but she would have led you a dance! Zakawa's daughters all got married when the white men came and fulfilled his prophecies."

Sindiga was bewildered.

"But," stammered he, "the girl you—the girl I—the girl Ondieki hoped to ——?"

"—My sister Nyamwita. Surely you haven't forgotten her? You and Nyamwita used to be good pals in the olden days—on the cliff, you remember? She followed me here to the mission and intends to become a Christian."

Sindiga looked at his friend with astonishment written all over his face; but recalling the process by which he had formed his conclusions as to the identity of "Barongo's girl," the truth gradually dawned upon him. Ondieki, jealous of his past intimacy with Barongo's sister, had long presumed Sindiga intended to marry her, whereas the idea had never entered Sindiga's mind. He had thought of her only as Nyakiage's friend and companion. When he had gone up the line to work, Ondieki had secretly rejoiced. Nyamwita, however, had refused to marry him, and not willing that his rival should succeed where he had failed, he had resorted to methods which could only ruin his chances. Sindiga now perceived that Ondieki's remark to the herdman about his (Nyambati's son) having "once cared for the girl himself," had reference, not to Zakawa's daughter, but to Nyamwita, the daughter of Kibagendi. Still he had to make sure that Barongo had understood him, so he said:

"Ondieki actually wanted to marry your sister?"

"To be sure he did; and Kibagendi, my father, was half persuaded by the price he offered. Also he was as desirous as Ondieki to get Nyamwita away from the mission; so they appealed to the Big *Bwana*, representing her to have been married some considerable time,

and he gave them a letter telling our *bwana* to hand her over to them.

"Taking advantage of my absence they got Nyamwita away from the mission. She begged, I was told, to be allowed to go home with Kibagendi, but Ondieki would not hear of it. 'You have my cattle,' he told father. 'Tell her she has to come right along with me.' And fearing he might lose the cattle, Kibagendi ordered her to go away quietly with Ondieki. He repented afterwards when he heard how she had been beaten, and nearly driven to her death in Nakuana. At the trial yesterday he admitted that Nyamwita had never been really married, and that he had no intention of keeping Ondieki's cattle."

"That must have been before I reached the courthouse?"

"Yes, Kibagendi left the court with the Headman of Kanyimbo as soon as he had had an opportunity of saying his say. I believe the headman advised him to put no further obstacles in the way of Nyamwita's remaining at the mission."

When Sindiga recovered from the shock of his first surprise, and was able to reflect coolly on the fact that Nyamwita was no other than Barongo's sister, he marveled that such a possibility had not occurred to him before. Ondieki's hint, however, had put him onto absolutely the wrong track. He pondered, not without emotion, the fact that the only girl he had ever thought of marrying had become the wife of a Lumbwa!—But what did it matter? He possessed plenty of cattle now and was not overparticular who he married—provided she was healthy, and could cook!

Now as he recalled what excellent friends he and Nyamwita had been in the half-forgotten days of their childhood; remembered more than one occasion when, much to Ondieki's mortification, she had shown a decided partiality for his company, Sindiga became con-

scious of a genuine, personal interest in this sister of Barongo's. Since his return to Gusii he had only seen her once, namely, on the road to Nakuana; and then it had been at a considerable distance. He had not even seen her face, but he had taken note of the fact that she was well-built, agile, and strong; and he took it for granted that the passing of a few years would not have detracted anything from her comeliness. Would she, he wondered, misjudge the motive which had induced him to follow her and her captors to Nakuana? If Barongo explained, would she be inclined to believe his story?

Sindiga, whose one thought up till now had been to prove his affection for the son of Kibagendi, realized now that he was no longer a disinterested friend. If Nyamwita was free, why should he not marry her himself? Could he not proffer as many cattle as Ondieki? and was not Barongo, his friend, in need of them?

He was about to broach the subject when up to where they sat floated the strains of an impromptu song, accompanied by the sound of thudding feet, and shrill cries reiterated. A single voice led in the impromptu parts, but scores of voices joined in the refrain. It grew louder and increased in volume, and presently a great crowd of women and girls hove into sight. The smell of their unwashed bodies, and the rancid fat in which their goat-skins were steeped, came up to where the young men sat. They danced and ran as they sang, throwing themselves into all manner of contortions, but withal keeping perfect time.

Sindiga watched the dancers, strangely unappreciative of both song and dance. Before his contact with civilization he would have applauded enthusiastically such a performance, but now it failed to impress him. Instead, it nauseated him. The song was meaningless, and the voices of the singers harsh. Sindiga's being was attuned to respond to an altogether different kind of music. He

was hungry for spiritual food, and the dance was extravagantly and wildly sensual.

These dancers were the wives, and prospective wives, of Kanyimbo. Sindiga realized with something like a shock that he no longer had anything in common with the kind of society they represented. As he sensed the change in himself, he marveled. How could he choose a wife from such as these?

Barongo studied his friend's face, but failed to read what was written there. On the way home, however, Sindiga unburdened himself, confessing the change that had been wrought in him and all the unsatisfied yearnings of his spirit.

Beside Barongo's bed that night, Sindiga knelt, and listened to Barongo pray. He even essayed to pray himself.

"O God!" he said. "I am lost, and the night is dark. I want Light. We children of men are as weak as eggs, and need help. Will you not teach us wisdom? Fill us, and all people, with thoughts that stand upright? As for Barongo, may he be the father of a tribe, and may he never stand in need of any good thing."

Having thus briefly expressed himself he got up with a sigh of relief.

The next day he met Nyamwita coming back from the spring at the foot of Nyanchwa Hill and greeted her respectfully. She was taller than his remembrance of Zakawa's daughter, and her eyes were hazel instead of black; her lips were dark in hue; her ears perforated, but without ornaments; her hair short, and shaven away where it might have encroached upon her neck and forehead. She wore a white frock and stood very erect in it, with the roundest of round water-pots balanced perfectly on her head. Her neck and arms, and her bare, perfectly shaped legs, were brown like Sindiga's own. A red sash encircled her waist, which looked slender contrasted with the width of her rounded hips

and the full curves of her bosom. When she walked it was with the lithe grace of a woman possessed of high spirits, pride, and perfect health. Her feet and her hands were small, her fingers long and tapering. As she gave Sindiga the tips of these to shake, her eyelids dropped, and she blushed; but as she blushed she smiled, and her teeth gleamed as white as ivory; and because she was a very modest maiden she must needs incline her head to one side a little, so that her free hand was requisitioned to steady the water-pot on her head. Standing thus she looked exceedingly beautiful in Sindiga's eyes. He called to mind how merry and daring she had been in the olden, golden days of cliff-climbing and honey-hunting. Furthermore, remembering that he no longer lacked cattle, he then and there decided that no better fortune could befall him than to own a wife so fair, and withal so strong and well-shapen.

So that evening Sindiga proposed to Nyamwita in Barongo's presence. There was nothing dramatic about the way he did it—he did not even take hold of her hand. He simply "talked business" to her in a quiet, urgent way; and Nyamwita, confessedly the fairest flower of Kanyimbo, hid her face from him with her two hands and whispered her answer—into Barongo's ear.

A few days later Sindiga "proposed" to her father, Kibagendi. The old man had taken the advice of the Headman of Kanyimbo, and had given up trying to persuade his daughter to leave the mission; only he had urged her to get married as soon as possible to somebody. When he saw Sindiga's cattle he enthusiastically gave his consent.

Kibagendi was not really a miserly old man; but in common with all elderly Africans he loved cattle—and what cattle could buy. Kaffir parents regard the price they receive for their daughters as a legitimate return for labor expended. Young men usually settle down in

the neighborhood of their old homes, where they can render their parents help at hoeing and harvest time. With their sisters it is different. Custom forbids a girl marrying anyone of her own clan, so that as a rule her parents see little of her after her marriage. Even should her husband's home be in the locality, a married woman is fully occupied with the affairs of her own household and has little time for visiting. When old people lose the help and support of their daughters, therefore, they consider they have an unquestionable right to require compensation at the hands of their sons-in-law. Very similarly, in some parts, if a man wishes to dwell away from the clan to which he owes allegiance, he must first pay his chief adequate compensation in cattle.

In due course the nature of Christian wedlock was explained to Sindiga by a white man whom Barongo introduced as "our *bwana*." He and Sindiga had met before, however; it was the same European who had eaten roasted maize with him outside his highland abode.

Sindiga was advised to defer his marriage with Nyamwita till he should have had a better opportunity of studying the requirements of the Christian religion. To this postponement of his nuptials he reluctantly agreed; but long before the stipulated time had elapsed his cattle were safely lodged in Kibagendi's kraal, and the old man had expressed his willingness to provide Barongo with a handsome dowry whenever he cared to ask for it.

Now Barongo had set his heart upon marrying a half-sister of John Neko's, and about this time the girl was persuaded by her brother to attend the mission school. Here she soon came under the spell of Nyamwita's attractive personality. The two became fast friends; and it did not take the newcomer long to find out that Barongo had more than a casual interest in

her. She reciprocated this interest and made eloquent mention of Kibagendi's cattle to her father, so that when Barongo turned up at her father's kraal with six healthy-looking cows (three in excess of the Government regulation!) his suit was not refused.

Sindiga in a short time became a thorough-going Christian, but in many respects an unconventional one. For quite a long time he persisted in wearing a blanket in preference to any sort of cotton clothing. "If camel's hair was good enough for John the Baptist," he would say to Barongo, "a blanket is good enough for me"; and sometimes he would say, "Since I cannot change the color of my skin, why should I copy the Europeans in my dress?" But his friend would invariably reply: "The white men are wiser than we are. We can't go far wrong if we do as they do."

Sindiga's habits of life altered but little. He was a true child of Nature; he reveled in work and play out of doors. Although he rapidly mastered reading and writing, he did not greatly shine as a scholar. He abhorred mathematics, and made but slow progress in geography, history, and hygiene; on the other hand, he became an expert carpenter in a remarkably short space of time.

Life, and every expression of it, thrilled Sindiga. Babies, springing corn, exhibitions of physical strength, music, oratory, foreign languages and customs, all held a fascination for him. He studied to be friendly and to make friends, and delighted in human companionship. Yet there were times when he would wander off alone into the bush, intensely occupied with his own thoughts—thoughts of God and of man, of native tradition and Occidental omniscience, of the old fighting days, and of Nyambati the Lion-hearted. And often he would think of Keruo, wondering how she had met her end, and whether he was indeed her son or the son of some unknown Lumbwa.

Sindiga nearly always thought of the past when he looked across at the Great Cliff at break of day. He loved to watch its shadow being driven steadily back and back over the undulations of Kitutu till the whole of Gusii was bathed in golden light. This daily triumph of the sun always seemed to him symbolic of the Dawn that was coming to Africa—the Dawn his race had waited for so long.

He gave up all ideas of starting a settlement in the wilds, and built for himself a hut in the mission village so as to be near the school. John Neko gave Sindiga a piece of land on Nyanchwa Hill for a garden, and here in the cool of early morning Nyambati's son was usually to be seen, busy with hoe or hatchet. But when the sun rose majestically over the escarpment, he would stand for a few minutes to watch its triumphant ascent of the eastern sky, till the black shadow of the cliff turned blue or purple, and the lesser shadows fled away.

One morning he was standing thus, hoe in hand, momentarily unconscious of everything but the red morning sunlight and the paling shadow of Manga, when a voice strangely familiar accosted him. Turning round, he found himself face to face with Zakawa's daughter.

He was greatly surprised at the change he saw in her. Her dark eyes no longer sparkled with the luster for which they had once been remarkable. Her lips had coarsened, and her person was sadly neglected.

"How do you do, son of Nyambati?" she greeted him, in a voice less melodious than formerly.

"Kai!" Sindiga ejaculated. "You here, on Nyanchwa Hill! But how are you? You look ill."

"Yes, I have traveled far," she answered with a tired smile. "My husband is dead and buried, so I have come home."

"Home to Gusii! Ah! There's no place in the world like Gusii. I am sorry, though, to see you in trouble."

"Yes, I knew you would be. You're a good sort. But

really, I think my troubles are at an end. I am going to marry an Omogusii, and settle down and forget all about the past."

"An Omogusii?"

"Yes. You remember the smelter of Kanyimbo? He has spoken for me, and he is a proper man—don't you think so, Sindiga? But I have a message for you."

"What! A message for me? From whom?" Sindiga was incredulous.

"Listen. There is something else I must tell you first—something about my father. He was a great traveler, and saw white men long before they came to Gusii. He used to travel everywhere. No one alive in your father's day knew the Lumbwa country better than old Zakawa did. When the Lumbwas carried Keruo off, he it was who guided Nyambati to the Lumbwa kraal where you and your mother were imprisoned. You were a babe in arms then. But listen! The Lumbwa had no intention of giving up Keruo, so he declared she had been killed when trying to escape, and offered Nyambati her child to pacify him. Your father would have shed blood there and then, but Zakawa restrained him. 'Think of your son—Sindiga,' he said. 'We are in enemy country and we shall all three of us lose our lives if you attempt to execute your vengeance now.' So Nyambati took the child, and they went back home. On their way back Nyambati set fire to many Lumbwa huts and corn-cribs, but full vengeance was deferred till you, Sindiga, came to man's estate. When your spear dealt the fatal blow which slew your mother's tyrant, Keruo changed hands. She was told—in fact, word reached her from Gusii—that you and Nyambati were both dead, slain in battle. Her second master treated her more kindly than the first—less like a slave and more like a wife. She lived in ignorance of the fact that you were alive until recently. Know, however, that she is both alive and

well. Her present husband and mine were related, and when mine died I met your mother at the funeral."

Sindiga was overcome at this obviously true story. "Nyambati was indeed my father, and my Gusii mother is still alive!" he exclaimed.

"Ay.—And Sindiga, I've brought her with me. She is waiting for you below in the village. She wants to stay till your wedding, and then she will return to her other children and her Lumbwa husband. They need her, she says, more than you possibly can."

Who shall describe the pathos of the meeting that followed? Mother and son did not embrace each other—that would have been contrary to Gusii custom—but moist eyes and nervous fingers spoke volumes. Sindiga sent for a fat calf and had it killed. John Neko's sister and Nyamwita ran and gathered two large basketfuls of savory greens; and Barongo, not to be outdone, went across to the market-place on Bigendi hill and brought back with him a great gourdful of sour milk and several large bundles of firewood. Keruo laughed and cried for joy that Sindiga had cherished her memory so, and in the course of the day appeared to grow young again.

As many old friends as could be hunted up in a day came to take part in the joy feast. Nyanguka and Nyakiage were called, and Machuki, and Ontegi; uncles, aunts, and cousins, and a great host of loyal friends from Kanyimbo beneath the cliff. Old Nyarango was there, and Zakawa's daughters, and the smelter who had been forced to turn plain "smith." John Neko turned up with a huge harp, and extolled everyone present, but particularly Sindiga and Barongo. He sang until he was hoarse, and then sang some more, until he and the harp together had told everybody's story, with praises and benedictions cunningly interspersed. Finally Sindiga himself took the harp and in a triumphant burst of martial music sang the praises of all the sons of the cliff, weaving into his song exhortations to all who

heard him to join in the new battle against ignorance and superstition. He made eloquent mention of Nyanguka the Fearless One and Barongo the Christian; but when he came to the name of Nyambati he twanged the harp softly, and finally laid it aside.

They feasted and sang till late; and if the white missionary, busy till a late hour himself with translation work, had known what rejoicings there were in the native village that night, he would very nearly have wished himself a "son of Manga."

Sindiga, son of Nyambati and Keruo, and Barongo, Sindiga's friend, were married a week or so later in the little stone church on Nyanchwa Hill. They are Christians of sterling worth. Their faith in God and generosity of disposition are an inspiration to all with whom they come into contact. Kibagendi, as a matter of course, made generous contributions to Barongo's wedding feast, and when all the festivities were over Keruo returned to her Lumbwa home. She is hale and hearty and visited often by an adoring son.

Nyanguka is as good-natured and as conservative as ever. Whether or not that honest-hearted man will ever embrace the Christian religion depends largely upon the representatives of Christianity, black and white, with whom he comes in contact. But Sindiga will surely do *his* part. The book *Sindiga, the Christian* has yet to be written, and Nyanguka will read that book before ever it is printed, even as every life is being read. He still deplores the advent of the white men, maintaining that civilization was never meant for Africa. The country, he says, is going from bad to worse; and Nyakiage and her companion wives, being quite as conservative as their "better half," give voice to the same sentiments, quoting his words, and adding with conviction: "And he's quite right too!"